India

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NOTES AND NEWS.

On Tuesday morning we received a telegram to the following effect from a correspondent at Calcutta: "Indian society has been shocked by a cowardly outrage. Dr. Sircar, a well-known doctor, of extensive practice—a Municipal Commissioner of Barrackpur, and an honorary magistrate—has been brutally kicked to death within fifty yards of a police outpost, close to the railway station. The assault is believed to have been utterly unprovoked. Three soldiers are reported to have attacked Dr. Sircar's carriage, and, on his remonstrating, to have broken the window-panes of the carriage and brutally assaulted him. One soldier, who is reported to have taken refuge in a mosque, has been arrested, and in reply to an observation from the police inspector is stated to have said, 'You are insulting me before niggers.' Two other soldiers are believed to have fled, one of them leaving his helmet behind." Our correspondent adds that assaults upon Indians by European soldiers are not unfrequent, and the offenders commonly go unpunished. We print this astounding news with all reserve, abstaining from comment until the facts are fully known. There can, indeed, be no doubt as to the scandalous difficulty of obtaining a verdict against a European in India for an assault upon an Indian. But it seems incredible that so dastardly an outrage as is here suggested can have been perpetrated. The news will not be credited here without the clearest proof. So far as we have been able to discover, no hint of the occurrence has yet (Thursday afternoon) been telegraphed to the newspapers by Reuter.

Many persons believe that the ecclesiastical establishment in India is kept up solely for the benefit of the British troops. According to the *Friend of India*, quoting a recent Parliamentary Return, the expenditure on all denominations is Rs. 22,04,610, or Rs. 30 for each soldier—enough, it might be thought, to satisfy the most voracious appetites for spiritual manna, a taste for which the British soldier is not usually renowned. And if, as Mr. Samuel Smith feared, the chaplains were too few in the war beyond the frontier, it was not for want of an adequate provision in money. But, as a matter of fact, there not only exist churches in places where there are no troops, but in the larger centres there are many more churches than the troops require.

It was pointed out by Mr. H. J. Reynolds, C.S.I., in India for September, 1894, that although the Anglicans were only 14 per cent. of the Christian population, the Catholics alone being nearly 60 per cent., yet the Church of England took nine-tenths of the allotted revenue. But this is nothing to the injustice the people of India suffer. The amount may not be great in comparison with the total revenue of the country; but, great or small, it is money taken from the impoverished taxpayers of India to supply the spiritual needs of one of the richest sections of the community, and to support a religion which the great mass of the people obstinately refuse to believe, and insist on regarding as hostile to their own. Is it fair that Hindus and Mahometans should have to contribute to the Bishop of Calcutta's Rs. 45,000 per annum, to the purchase of communion plate, or to the provision of pure Christianity to the civilian Presbyterians of Calcutta at the modest price of Rs. 200 per head? Well may Mr. Reynolds say that "the Established Church in India is now fairly entitled to rank as the most indefensible ecclesiastical institution existing in the world," and that "it exists in defiance of every principle of justice, policy, and common-sense."

A further Blue-book (No. IV.a) on the Famine and the Relief operations in India, which has been issued this week, publishes at last the correspondence relating to the appointment of the present Famine Commission. The suggestion that a Commission should be appointed appears to have come, not from the India Office, but from Lord Elgin, in a telegram dated November 22 last, followed by a despatch dated November 25. Candid readers of the correspondence cannot fail to observe the anxiety of the Government of India to confine the investigations of the Commission within as narrow limits as may be. "The scope of the enquiry will," the Government of India explains, "be infinitely narrower than in 1878." The earlier Commission "were bidden to consider and advise upon measures of the widest possible nature, such as 'might diminish the severity of famines, or place the people in a better condition for enduring them'." It is suggested that nothing of this kind is now necessary. What is wanted is merely to collate details regarding the administration of relief measures:—

> Especially we think (Lord Elgin and his colleagues write) that, where the cost of relief and the numbers relieved have been larger than elsewhere in proportion to the acuteness of the distress and the population affected by it, it will be advisable to enquire to what causes the excess was due, and whether an adherence to the lines followed in other provinces might not, on a future occasion, reduce the cost without diminishing the efficacy of the measures to be adopted.

All of which goes to confirm the opinion we have more than once expressed as to the wretched inadequacy of the enquiry.

"It is the details of the scheme of relief that require to be revised," says the Government of India. "Partly that," we rejoin, "but what is infinitely more important is careful examination of suggestions towards the prevention of famine." And it is interesting to see that when the Government of India came to frame the terms of reference, it bettered, to some extent, its own formula. Here are the appointed duties of the Commission:—

> (1) To examine the manner in which the provisions of the Famine Codes of the several provinces differ from one another, and in what their prescriptions have been departed from;
> (2) To enquire into the degree of success which has in each case attended the measures adopted, considered primarily with regard to the relief of distress and the saving of human life, and secondarily with regard to economy;
> (3) To advise as to the measures and methods of working which seem likely to prove most effective in these two respects; and
> (4) To make any enquiries and record any recommendations or opinions which it is thought will prove useful in the case of future famines.

The utility of the Commission, it seems to us, will be mainly determined by the extent to which it deals with (4).

Lord G. Hamilton, indeed, in his letter of December 23, says he is glad "that, under the fourth head, you have encouraged the Commission to make such general or special recommendations as they may see fit on the subject of famine relief administration." But, surely, to say this is unduly to limit the meaning of the fourth clause. We hope that the Commission and its witnesses are interpreting this section of the reference as widely as the words themselves will allow. Take, for example, the notorious fact that Bengal owes its immunity from famine largely to the permanent settlement. Does not that fact suggest a recommendation or opinion likely to prove useful in the case of future famines? It would require

very little ingenuity, we think, to formulate most of the leading suggestions for the prevention of famine in such a way as to bring them within the terms of (4), and we hope that the Indian witnesses are working this part of the reference for all that it is worth.

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, in the course of a recent letter acknowledging receipt of a copy of Sir William Wedderburn's "Suggestions Towards the Prevention of Famine in India" ("The Skeleton at the Jubilee Feast") writes:—

> Your main facts I have long known. About twenty years ago I took for a year a newspaper first, then changed to a kind of magazine, published by a retired newspaper editor from Calcutta, one who had been a thorn in the side of the Government—showing up their misdeeds and taking the side of the Natives. I forget the name of both man and paper, but they impressed me greatly, as he quoted public or official documents for all his facts. Especially he dwelt on the iniquity of the debt-courts allowing the lands to be confiscated which ought to be inalienable wherever there is any sort of peasant proprietary. The collecting assessments in money and at fixed dates, and the robbery of the rayats by raising the assessments to rack-rents, were all impressed upon me. It is really terrible, and proves, I believe, that, reckoned by the fair balance of results of increased happiness or increased misery to the bulk of the population, our rule is a curse instead of a blessing. The only fault I can find with your paper is that it is too moderate. Unless our rule can so protect the bulk of the Indian population that they may obtain all the results of their own good qualities, it is a failure. We ought not to take even the best of the Native Governments as a standard, but aim at something higher. Under all the old Governments, no doubt, the money-lender was a necessity, but I cannot think he ought to be a necessity under decent government, under which the rayat had a 50 per cent. assessment and justice. The centralisation of government in India seems to be the terrible evil.

The journal referred to by Dr. Wallace is obviously the *Statesman*, edited by the late Mr. Robert Knight. In this connexion we may mention that Messrs. Robert Knight and Sons, the proprietors of the Calcutta *Statesman*, have lately reprinted in pamphlet form a compilation of Mr. Knight's articles upon the Indian National Congress, and have kindly sent 1,000 copies of the pamphlet to the British Committee for distribution. We shall deal in a future issue with Mr. Knight's articles, which are valuable as showing how the problems of Indian administration appeared to an experienced and distinguished English journalist in Calcutta.

There are some interesting particulars in the April issue of *India's Cry*—the organ of the Salvation Army in India—about the village bank which was started at Samarkha a year ago. It appears that

> the Bank was commenced with a capital of Rs. 2,000. A part of this, Rs. 1,800, was found by the Foreign Secretary on behalf of the General, and Rs. 200 was subscribed by the members. The whole of this was advanced to the Bank at 6 per cent., and lent among the members, who number 26, in amounts varying from Rs. 17 to Rs. 300, and for varying periods from six months to three years, the larger sums being for a longer period, to be paid either in two or three annual instalments. The interest charged by the Bank for the money thus advanced to the members varied from 8 to 10 per cent.

The results of the first year's work are eminently satisfactory. "There has not been a single defaulter, every member having paid up both the interest and the capital due." Interest at 6 per cent. has been paid to the Salvation Army on the sum of Rs. 1,800, and to the subscribing members on the sum of Rs. 200.

> The expenses of the Bank amount to Rs. 25, which included safe, books, and printing, and after paying the interest on the money advanced and these expenses, there was a balance, being a net profit of Rs. 49, which will increase the capital of the Bank and form an accumulating amount to the credit of the members.

It seems also that common association with the bank has in various ways tended to develop a sense of union among the members, and it is now proposed to increase the capital in order to provide for new members, "as many more in the village desire to obtain the benefits derived through the bank."

In this connexion we may cite some passages from two interesting letters which have reached us from Mr. T. Lewis Ingram. Mr. Ingram, who some time ago helped Commissioner Booth-Tucker in framing rules for the formation and guidance of village banks in India, writes: "Having about fifty villages in the North-West Provinces and the Punjab, I started about two years ago, with a view of freeing our tenantry from the extortion of the village *bania*, a system of advances of seed-grain to our cultivators, and it has worked well; so much so that this year I have extended the advances to them to the purchase of ploughing bullocks. I found that the *bania*, in supplying seed-grains in the autumn repayable in grain at the spring harvest, charged what amounted, with extortion, to nearly forty per cent. per annum—the extortion being that the *bania* gave the tenants in the autumn, say, one seer seed-grain *less* per rupee than the market rate, and took from them in the spring one or two seers of grain per rupee *more* than the market rate, and charged them, in addition, interest at the rate of twenty-five per cent. per annum. We have supplied our tenantry with seed-grain in the autumn at the market price of the day, without any deduction whatever, and received payment in grain at the spring harvest at the market rate of the day, without any increase, and have charged them interest at the rate of nine per cent. per annum."

Mr. Ingram continues:—"The advances for seed and food-grains during the first year (ending April, 1897) are as under:—

Wheat	Rs. 2,685
Barley..	691
Grain	1,737
	5,113
Cash advanced to new settlers for ploughing bullocks, etc.	375
Interest received	256
(This first year's interest was charged only at 6¼ per cent. per annum).	
	Rs. 5,744

Every rupee advanced was paid during the year. There were no bad debts; and there was a considerable profit during this first year owing to the grain having been purchased cheap at the spring harvest of 1896, and stored till the autumn, by which time the price had considerably risen. But the year now ending this month will doubtless show a loss, principally for the reason that we bought grain at famine prices at the spring harvest in April, 1897, and in some of our villages, where the tenantry are well-to-do, the people did not take the grain which I had bought at famine rates, and it was left on my hands to be sold at a cheaper price. I am not, however, discouraged. Our tenants in the more prosperous villages, while they could not of course fail to see the advantages of getting rid of the exorbitant charges of the *bania*, told me candidly when I was in India three months ago that their reason for not taking grain from us was that as I could not also promise to lend them money for marriages and funerals, they did not care to break away from the *bania*, who would not give them aid for these purposes unless they also took grain from him. I feel, then, if I am to get our people out of the clutches of the *bania*, and save them from his future extortion, that this difficult matter of cash advances for marriages and funerals must be faced, and to some extent, and under certain limitations, allowed."

In a further article in the *Pioneer*, Mr. Theodore Beck adduces five indirect "proofs" of the increasing wealth of the people of India. "In 1850," he says, "the amount of property involved in civil suits in Madras was 55 lakhs; and in 1889-90 it was 375 lakhs. It would thus appear that property in Madras probably increased sevenfold in value." "Here's richness," as Mr. Squeers would say. Besides, we thought that civil administrators regarded the increase of litigation as one of the banes of India. Mr. Beck's second "proof" is that the number of letters and post-cards has increased. That is obviously convincing. His third "proof" is that more people travel by rail. Does it not occur to the Principal of Aligarh College that travelling by rail is cheaper than travelling by bullock carts, a fact with which the increase in the number of railway passengers is obviously connected? But his final proofs are the best—the increase of population and of the Government revenues. Recurring land settlements in every province of India except Bengal undoubtedly produce an increase of revenue. Thoughtful administrators regard this system as one of the main causes of the indebtedness and poverty of the cultivating classes, and of frequent and disastrous famines. But Mr. Beck sees in it a sign of increasing prosperity.

Sir Alexander Mackenzie, late Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, has thought fit to offer an explanation to the people of Bengal for the indiscreet, violent, and abusive speech which he made in the Viceroy's Council upon the

new Sedition Act. In the course of his explanation, Sir Alexander says:—

In discussing the question of sedition in India, I was dealing with Imperial issues, and I had ample material before me to justify every word I said. The "petty traitors" in connexion with whom I ventured on a certain poetical simile are to be found elsewhere in far more serious numbers than in Bengal. The Bengali Press is not by any means the worst in India, though some specimens of it are certainly bad enough, as even the Anglo-Vernacular Press of Calcutta has admitted. On the whole, I have no doubt that Bengal is loyal at heart.

Sir Alexander has left India in broken health, and one does not wish to say anything harsh at such a time. But the root blunder which he committed—the blunder which our modern administrators seem perilously apt to commit —is to ignore the fact that India can no longer be ruled under a system of pure despotism wherein the voice of the educated classes is practically unrepresented; and that India cannot be coerced by repressive acts or intimidated by undignified and abusive language.

The *Bengali* makes the following remarks upon the new Rent Law which Sir Alexander Mackenzie passed on the eve of his departure from India:—

Perhaps the most objectionable feature of the Bill is the attempt to deprive the Civil Court of its jurisdiction to enquire into the justice or otherwise of an enhancement of rent by a Settlement Officer. Section 104H lays down certain conditions under which alone the settlement operations could be impeached in a court of law. All the seven grounds set forth are no doubt required by the exigencies of the case, but they do not cover the most important ground, viz., "*that the enhancement of rent is not justifiable under the provisions of the Act.*" This ground found a place in Bengal Act VIII of 1879, and has the sanction of the highest revenue authority in the land, the Board of Revenue. The effect of section 104H would be to give to the decisions of revenue officers a finality which would alike be wrong on principle and policy. The revenue officer is untrammelled by the rules of judicial procedure. The rayat has not, therefore, before him the guarantees of justice which he has in a court of law. And yet he is to be debarred the right of questioning the validity or justice of the decision. Such a course would be subversive of all the ordinary principles of justice. No greater misfortune could befall the rayat.

We print on another page an article on this subject by Mr. Romesh C. Dutt, C.I.E., who was a revenue officer in Bengal for more than a quarter of a century.

One cannot read without regret the following account in the *Bengali* of the way in which Sir Alexander Mackenzie, at one time the idol of the people, lost his popularity in Bengal through a series of repressive and retrograde measures, and through speeches of questionable taste. It is a pity that the officer who was a champion of self-government under Lord Ripon should have lived to administer the severest blow at municipal self-government in India, and that the officer who was at one time considered the champion of the cultivating classes should by his last act in India deprive the tenants in Government estates of one of their most valued rights. The *Bengali* says:—

His Bengalee friends vied with each other in giving him parties. The wealthiest of our countrymen flung wide open their doors to accord him a hospitable welcome. For the time the community gave way to transports of joy, and the first utterances and acts of his Honour confirmed the early impressions formed regarding him. Can it be said that the Indian community now retain these impressions, and that they are prepared to thunder forth their regrets at his approaching departure as they thundered forth their congratulations when he assumed the reins of Government? We are afraid this question must be answered in the negative. Sir Alexander Mackenzie has contrived to lose all the popularity that he ever possessed. His speech at Palmer's Bridge, his speech on the Sedition Bill, his explanation of his speech, and last but not least his Calcutta Municipal Bill, have all contributed to depose him from the place which he occupied in the affections of the people, and make him one of the most unpopular rulers Bengal has ever had.

Here is an instructive passage from the report of the pleasant gathering lately held in Calcutta to do honour to Mr. R. D. Mehta on his being made a Companion of the Indian Empire:—

In proposing the toast of her Majesty, Mr. Pugh said: "I need hardly say that there is a greater affection for her Majesty in this country than the people are given credit for. I regret much that her Majesty's name was brought into the recent Sedition Bill passed by the Government of India. Personally, I feel that there was no necessity to pass that law, so far as it affected her Majesty. Affection for her Majesty's person and Government is so deeply rooted in the hearts of her Indian people that no legislative enactment was necessary to increase it."

Mr. Pugh is, of course, the distinguished English barrister to whom we have had previous occasion to refer.

How absurd, under certain officials, even "relaxed" quarantine regulations may be made is shown in an amusing case related in the *Indian Spectator*. A gentleman wishing to take his sister to her husband applied for two passes. The official said that he was only giving passes to those going on business, and that while he could well understand that the gentleman had business—namely, that of escorting his sister—he could not consider that going to her husband was any "business" for a lady. He, therefore, offered a pass to the brother to enable him to escort his sister, but refused a pass to the sister for escorting whom the brother was given his pass. The passes were only obtained by appealing to the Plague Commissioner.

We quoted last week (p. 259) a passage from an article in the Madras *Hindu* which, referring to Sir H. Fowler's statement "that the land tax in India does not exceed 8 per cent. of the gross produce of the crops," declared that the Government of Madras claimed "one-half of the share in that produce." An esteemed Anglo-Indian correspondent points out that this statement is inaccurate. The phrase "that produce" should be "the net produce"—a very different matter. We regret that we should have given currency to a statement which clearly seems to have been inaccurate, though it will, we imagine, hardly be maintained that one-half of the net is less than 8 per cent. of the gross produce—which was the point at issue.

At the second annual meeting of the Increased Armaments Protest Committee, held at St. Martin's Town Hall last Tuesday, under the presidency of Dr. Spence Watson, a resolution was unanimously adopted, on the motion of Sir W. Wedderburn, M.P., seconded by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, declaring that the war recently carried on beyond the North-West frontier of India was unjust in its origin and disastrous in its results to the best interests of India and the Empire. Lord Farrer, in a letter regretting his inability to attend, wrote:—"Alas! I am fit for no public meeting. But there never was a time when it was more necessary for true believers to preach the forgotten gospel of peace. Economy—a gospel of my youth—is flung to the winds. The nations make it their highest virtue to arm against each other. And we ourselves, whose greatest interest is peace, and whose advantage lies not in extension of empire, but in trade with the world, are ready to show our teeth and fight for every worthless bit of the earth's surface, on little or no ground, except that some other nation also desires to have it."

We are glad to see that Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Dr. Sarat Mullick, and their colleagues of the London Indian Society, have formulated a scheme that is likely to prove of great utility to Indians who cross the black water to this country. As will be seen from the circular printed on another page, the London Indian Society has appointed a committee of gentlemen willing to give their young fellow-countrymen the practical assistance and advice which are invaluable to strangers on their arrival. As the Committee starts with the co-operation of "corresponding members" in Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, there is every reason to anticipate that its work will be as efficient as it is generous. It is pleasant to find an Indian like Dr. Sarat Mullick, who has won for himself a distinguished position here in the keen competition of the medical schools, devoting his leisure in this serviceable way to the needs of his fellow-countrymen.

In accordance with a resolution adopted by the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, the following letter has been forwarded to Mr. Jnanen N. Ray:—

British Committee of the Indian National Congress,
84 & 85 Palace Chambers, S.W.
May 2, 1898.

My Dear Sir,—I am writing to express to you the sincere regret with which I and my fellow-members of the British Committee heard at our last meeting of the death of our former colleague, Mr. Parbati C. Roy. It would be difficult to exaggerate the services which Mr. Roy rendered to the Committee, especially through his minute knowledge of details of practical administration in India; and we ask you to convey to Mrs. Roy an expression of our sincere sympathy with her in a loss which, while it falls with special severity upon the relatives and friends of our late colleague, is also shared by very many well-wishers of the Indian people.—Believe me, faithfully yours,—W. Wedderburn, *Chairman*.

Jnanen N. Ray, Esq.

PARLIAMENT AND THE NATUS.

WE are enabled to state that a petition has this week been received by a member of the House of Commons, and will shortly be presented to Parliament, praying for the release of the brothers Natu, who are still imprisoned without trial at Ahmedabad and Thana. The petition comes from the wife of the elder brother—Sirdar Balwant Rao Natu—and is said to be couched in the eloquence of simple pathos. The wonder is that such a petition has not been received before. But we are informed, from an authoritative source, that the cause of the delay is to be found in the state of abject terror to which the relatives and friends of the prisoners have been reduced by the monstrously oppressive proceedings of the Government of Bombay, acting with the approval, if not under the orders, of Lord George Hamilton. The facts of the case, which are recited in the petition, are familiar to readers of INDIA. It may be well, however, to recapitulate them as clearly and briefly as possible, and to set forth the precious "reasons" which have hitherto been vouchsafed for what is on the face of it an unpardonable abuse of a Regulation sufficiently repulsive and obsolete in itself. Before, however, we pass on to these particulars, let us say one word as to the presentation of the petition to Parliament. There is in the "rules and orders" of the House of Commons an admirable though little known Standing Order (No. 463, p. 161) which provides that in the case of a "petition complaining of some present personal grievance, for which there may be an urgent necessity for providing an immediate remedy, the matter contained in such petition may be brought into discussion on the presentation thereof." It would, we think, be difficult to conceive a petition more precisely fulfilling the conditions here stated than the petition which is about to be presented; and we sincerely trust that the members of Parliament who are interesting themselves in this grave matter will succeed in obtaining the advantages of discussion.

In view of the expected debate, the following statement of the facts may perhaps be of service. On June 22 last year Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst were murdered at Poona. Our Jingoes, here and in India, at once assumed the existence of a widespread conspiracy, and clamoured for repressive measures on an ambitious scale. Nearly a month passed, and no clue was discovered. On July 17 the Simla correspondent of the *Times* telegraphed that "the worst possible effect" would be created if a "policy of inaction" were "persisted in much longer." The "policy of inaction" promptly ceased. Sir John Woodburn was despatched to Poona, and on July 27 Mr. Tilak was arrested. On the following day Sirdar B. R. Natu and his brother were deported from Poona, under the provisions of Regulation XXV of 1827. No charge was made against them. They were not then, and have not since been, brought to trial. On the contrary, the Bombay Government has stated in India, and Lord G. Hamilton has stated in Parliament, that it is not intended to bring them before a court or to adduce evidence against them where they can meet it. Nevertheless, two different and antagonistic explanations for their arrest have been officially vouchsafed, and, as it seems to us, have proved equally fantastic. It was stated (1) that the Natu brothers were connected with the Poona murders. The telegram which brought the news of their arrest said: "It is confidently expected that disclosures of an important kind will be one of the immediate results." Lord George Hamilton himself definitely announced as much. "I believe," he said, in the House of Commons on August 5, "that the authorities at Bombay are within their rights in the action which they have taken, and that the result of the proceedings will be to unravel the plot which has been formed." Such was the position when Parliament rose for the recess. But the events which followed showed how completely fanciful Lord G. Hamilton's belief was. In the first place, in none of the prosecutions which followed the murders was a shred of evidence brought forward to connect the brothers Natu, or either of them, with the crime. In the second place, an illiterate mendicant, Damodar Chapekar, confessed to the murders. He has since been tried and sentenced, the conviction was upheld on appeal, and he has been executed. During his trial, also, the prosecution made no attempt to associate the Natus in any degree with the crime of Jubilee day. In these circumstances, Lord George Hamilton might have been expected to release suspects who had been arrested without cause. He did nothing of the kind. What he did was to produce—in the debate on the Address last February (INDIA, page 123)—an entirely new and revised version of the case against the Natus, dropping, without so much as a syllable of reference to it, the theory or innuendo that they were associated with the Poona assassinations.

This second (2) version, which Lord George Hamilton, so far as we know, has not yet reconsidered, was announced with some pomp. The Secretary of State undertook to give Parliament "conclusive reasons" for the action of the authorities. The plague, he said, was "not yet stamped out," and if "clear and indisputable evidence" was placed before the Government that "certain persons, even in high stations, were traitors to the efforts to combat the plague," the Government was "bound to act accordingly"—meaning, apparently, though the *non sequitur* is amazing, that it was bound to have recourse to Regulation XXV of 1827! Well, he proceeded to unfold his "clear and indisputable evidence" against the Natu brothers, and, if there were any lawyers in the House at the time, it must have taken their breath away. It consisted—not to put too fine a point upon the matter—of two contemptible bits of tittle-tattle. In the first place (*a*) one of the lady nurses employed in the plague operations at Poona had, he said, "made a deposition that she had received a letter, purporting to be signed by one of the brothers Natu, stating that it would be greatly to her detriment if she worked with the search party. Since receiving this letter she persisted in working in the search operations, and she had not had a midwifery case in the city in consequence, although previously she frequently was called in." Observe, first, the amazing phrase "purporting to be signed." Surely the first duty of the authorities, if they were disposed to pay any attention at all to a deposition of this type, was to test the genuineness of the signature. Yet will it be believed that they took no steps whatever to this end? On March 28 last, in the Bombay Legislative Council, his Excellency the President admitted, in reply to a question, that no enquiries on this vital point had been made! Observe, next, the question-begging phrase "in consequence." Who in the world can prove that statement? The thing is beyond the reach of proof. But "A Poona Brahmin," in the letter which we printed last week, went at any rate some way towards showing that in consequence of the exodus from the city, and the poverty of those who remained, a midwifery case for a qualified and expensive nurse was not at that time likely to occur. Finally, who is this nurse? Her identity is clearly known to the authorities. Why is it not divulged? And is Lord G. Hamilton aware that in Bombay she is being identified with a woman who was embittered against Sirdar B. R. Natu because he had obtained in the Poona Small Cause Court—a transcript of the proceedings is before us as we write—a judgment for rent, the Court disbelieving her plea that the rent had been paid? Whatever may be the reasonableness of this conjecture—and we can of course express no opinion upon it—we put it to any sane man whether an allegation of the grotesque kind adopted by Lord G. Hamilton has ever before been dignified with the name of a "conclusive reason" and "clear and indisputable evidence."

The second bit of gossip upon which Lord G. Hamilton rested his amended case was (*b*) that "one of the brothers Natu had attempted in a most assiduous [? insidious] way to induce the police to declare that a woman who had really died from disease had been violated by a British soldier, and had died in consequence." The Bombay *Champion*, we see, throws some light upon the possible origin of this charge. Briefly, the suggested explanation is that, when the reports of outrages upon women were current last year, Sirdar B. R. Natu, in accordance with Mr. Lamb's request, made enquiries into the matter, and questioned a police *patel* at Parvati (the *Times of India* speaks of a *patel*, and there are no *patels* in Poona) as to the death of a low-caste woman who was found on the Singhur road. Again, we can express no opinion upon the conjecture. But it is obviously unfair and unreasonable to detain a man in prison for an unlimited period on a charge which he has had no opportunity of meeting, and which cannot be called clear, indisputable, and conclusive until it has been tested and established in a court of law.

We pass over the multitude of particular points which suggest themselves—such as the question, how can evidence against one brother justify the detention of both? or when did Regulation XXV of 1827 come to be a suitable instrument either (1) for the detection of ordinary crime, or (2) for the punishment of alleged corruption? We pass over the important correspondence which we published last November (p. 344) showing how zealously Sirdar B. R. Natu co-operated with the authorities in the measures taken to combat the plague. The point is: Why are the Natu brothers still detained? We trust that the House of Commons will press for a specific reply to this question. If Lord George Hamilton had never offered reasons, he might logically, though despotically, have refused them now. But he has abandoned the policy of silence, and his "clear and indisputable evidence," his "conclusive reasons," are before Parliament. Damodar Chapekar has been hanged. The plague has been stamped out at Poona. For what present reasons, then, are the untried suspects being detained? How long are they to be detained? Are they to be released privily? Or is it possible to hope that the appeal of the elder brother's wife will be granted? To ask for magnanimity in the matter would be merely irrelevant. Magnanimity seems to be reserved for the suffering people of Poona themselves, while the authorities—apparently to maintain the "prestige" of their high mightinesses—persist in a cruel blunder because it is their own.

WHEN IN DOUBT PLAY—COMMITTEES.

THE reckless enterprise of the Indian Government without and within British India is making its effects keenly felt even in the Viceregal Council. There is anything but satisfaction to ourselves in finding our predictions—exceedingly obvious predictions, as we have always said—coming true. Yet there does not appear to be the slightest ground for hope that the Government will yet do the right thing, unless it be fairly driven into the straight path by the report of the Committee, "having all the powers and all the attributes of a Royal Commission," just appointed by the Secretary of State to consider the monetary situation in India, in conjunction with the currency proposals recently sent home from Calcutta. And this is but a forlorn hope when one considers the composition of the Committee. In the debate on Mr. Vicary Gibbs's motion (INDIA, April 1), Lord George Hamilton stated clearly the intentions of the Government. The enquiry was to be impartial and retrospective, embracing the English as well as the Indian monetary system. The Committee was "not to be composed mainly of officials," but of "gentlemen of experience in connexion with India whose names carry weight," in order to secure the indispensable confidence of the community. There were to be no "extreme controversialists" or "faddists"; and "while we get gentlemen associated with banking and commercial interests, we should try and not put gentlemen on with too direct a personal interest in the exchange one way or the other." The task of selection is, of course, difficult. But it is not easy to say from the actual list that Lord George has followed out his own formula. The official element is certainly strong, and the representatives of banking and commercial interests do not appear to be specially free from direct interest in the exchange. Worst of all, there is no independent representative of the people of India, who are so deeply concerned in any conclusions that may be arrived at. But it is satisfactory that the Secretary of State has at once given to the public the proposals of the Government of India, instead of holding them back, as was so perversely done in 1892, till the work of the Committee was finished.

The present project is merely a continuation of the project of 1892-93. What is it all about? The Indian Government had (as of course it still has) to make heavy gold payments annually in London, and the rupee, which alone was available for the discharge of these obligations, was steadily falling. It was becoming more and more difficult for the Indian Government to find enough rupees for its remittances. The attempt to establish a stable ratio between gold and silver by international agreement broke down; and the thing could not be done apart from international agreement. "Under these conditions," said Lord George Hamilton, "what was to be done? What was the position which the late Government had to face? I do not want to use language too strong, but India was unquestionably nearing bankruptcy. (Hear, hear.) She could not pay her way, and one of two things was inevitable—either that she would be unable to meet her obligations or that this country would have to come to her aid." Now, obviously enough, inasmuch as India had been brought into this disastrous situation by the policy of the Government, and as the home Government was mainly interested in the causes and results of the external adventures of India, the home Government was in common honesty bound "to come to her aid." By external enterprises that were plainly avoidable, and by internal blundering and extravagance, the enormous gold indebtedness has been built up. If India "was unquestionably nearing bankruptcy"—and no one who has an atom of sense of responsibility would for a moment question it—then the blame lies chiefly with her Government, and in the last analysis with the India Office and with the grossly heedless Parliament at Westminster. The situation remains essentially the same to-day. But it has been rendered still graver than it was in 1892 by persistence in foolish, not to say criminal, external policy, and by a system of internal administration involving an economic drain that the country cannot bear, and revenue measures that press the life out of the prosperity of the people. If the Government were administered for the real benefit of India—that is to say, on principles suitable to the actual condition of the people and in accordance with the avowed policy of the public at home—there would be no insuperable difficulty in making India pay her way, or in bringing her back to prosperity and contentment.

The remedy adopted, however, in 1893 was not a natural but an obviously artificial remedy. The Indian mints were closed. The Calcutta despatch now states truly enough that the principle "that a contraction in the volume of our silver currency, with reference to the demands of trade, has the direct effect of raising its exchangeable value in relation to gold" has been vindicated. But how? The *Times* also says that the remedy has been temporarily successful. But has it? The success and the vindication are grotesquely illusory. The whole appearance of success has been in reality based upon a continuous system of disguised loans, the nature of which has been veiled from the home public, and has not been unveiled by the home Government—both parties being tarred with the same brush. Thus, while further burdens have been indirectly loaded on the back of the community at large, the Government of India has simply gone on piling up the national indebtedness. The load is causing "intolerable" uneasiness, and demanding therefore a fresh relief.

In these circumstances one might have expected that the Government of India would at last face the facts squarely. They do nothing of the kind. Rather than confess a course of disastrous policy, they will try yet another ostrich-like manœuvre, though the Empire should crash in ruin about their ears. They will now proceed to establish a gold standard. Why not a diamond standard while they are about it? They must continue to draw in their revenues in silver. The people generally cannot do anything with gold currency—except that a few of the more prosperous classes may hoard the coins away. Even Sir David Barbour, fervent bimetallist as he is, acknowledged that the gold half-sovereign would stand no chance of actual use. But a gold standard cannot in any case be established without an adequate reserve of gold; and where is India to get that prime requisite? Hear the exquisite sapience of the Indian Government:—

Our proposal is that her Majesty's Government should move Parliament to pass an Act giving the Secretary of State power to borrow up to a maximum of £20,000,000 for the purpose of establishing a gold standard in India. It is possible that the whole of this amount may not be required, but we believe that the possession of the power to push our efforts in the direction we indicate until our object is attained will greatly enhance the effect of our first more limited operations. The amount which may actually be required in order to establish exchange steadily at the level sixteenpence the rupee, can, as we have already said, only be determined by experience, and we have named as the maximum to which borrowing powers should be taken an amount which, we may take it, is certainly sufficient, and the interest on which the revenues of India can afford to pay. We think it most desirable that the maximum should be so fixed as to avoid any risk of having to move Parliament a second time for further borrowing powers; and the Act should provide that the borrowing shall be in such instalments as may be deemed desirable by the Secretary of State, and should require the Secretary of State to ship

to India immediately in sovereigns the amounts borrowed under the powers.

Such is "our proposal." The Indian Government has frankly abandoned all confidence in the recuperation of silver. The distrust of the white metal has spread through the community, preventing the importation of gold to meet the demands of trade (in spite of the much higher rate of discount and interest prevailing in India), and frightening away the investment of sterling capital. Yet, while exhibiting their own lack of confidence, the Viceroy and his colleagues hope by their new proposals to mitigate or remove the commercial distrust. And they ask for £20,000,000, commencing operations with £5,000,000. How do they know that £20,000,000 will serve the turn? Sir David Barbour some time ago concluded that £15,000,000 might do; and apparently Sir James Westland has put on the additional five millions to make assurance doubly sure. But equally experienced financiers, practical and theoretical, have put the indispensable reserve at various figures up to £100,000,000. On what grounds? On the merest guesswork. Who can tell the quantity of silver that is likely to emerge from hoards to be exchanged for gold? The experts cannot even tell how much the rupees in circulation will absorb; they cannot tell whether the sum will be nearer one million or two millions. When Calcutta therefore asks for "a maximum of £20,000,000," on such chance estimates, what is to be done if this maximum proves totally inadequate? But where are even £20,000,000 to be had? From the Bank of England? We ask whether, under present monetary conditions, the Bank can do it. Certainly not without the risk—the all but certain risk—of a marked increase of the Bank rate. Even the £5,000,000 for the start might raise the Bank rate. And we venture to say at once that £20,000,000 is practically impossible.

Writing in the *National Review* for May (of course before the proposals of the Indian Government were authoritatively known), Mr. William Fowler said:—

> We do not yet know officially what is proposed by the Indian Government, but certain plans have been published which are so alarming as to seem hardly credible. For example, it is said to be part of the Government scheme to sell 10 crores of rupees for their value as silver bullion—truly an extraordinary proposal. It is putting on an over-taxed market an amount more than equal to the whole silver output of the world for a year, and thus depressing the value of the silver in the remaining rupees, and at the same time realising a very heavy loss on the coin sold. One can hardly imagine a proposal more discouraging to the present holders of silver, coined or uncoined, and the Indian people must certainly get the impression from such a suggestion that their Government are careless as to the depression of silver and desire to drive it out of the field as a monetary metal, even in the East, except as mere token money.

But this "extraordinary proposal," this plan "so alarming as to seem hardly credible," is not only the definite proposal actually made by the Indian Government, but is positively contemplated as an "operation to be repeated a second year." "At present opinions are much divided, but I think," wrote Mr. William Fowler to our contemporary, "it will be found that men of business here would prefer open mints and the risk of a low exchange to the risk of causing a panic in London, in order to remove the 'intolerable' muddle which has come about in India through the action of Government five years ago." How much more emphatic must his opinion be now! The Committee bears a serious responsibility, and the fact that Sir Henry Fowler is to preside does not promise free scope to criticism involving the action of 1893. One can only aspire to the confidence of Ali Katir, the muleteer: "My son, everything in this world is in the hand of God."

A NOVEL RENT-LAW FOR BENGAL.

By Romesh C. Dutt, C.I.E.

(Late Officiating Commissioner of Orissa. Sometime member of the Legislative Council of Bengal.)

The wave of retrograde legislation which has set in in India under the present Government has not failed to affect the interest of the cultivators of Bengal. The cultivators of Bengal are in better circumstances than the cultivators of other parts of India, partly because landlords are protected from recurring increase of the State-demand by the Permanent Settlement of 1793, and partly because the tenants are protected from the unreasonable demands of landlords by Lord Canning's great Rent Act of 1859, modified and strengthened by subsequent Acts. The Rent Law, however, which has just been passed by the Bengal Council, is a retrograde measure, and for the first time within the last forty years weakens and does not strengthen the position of Bengal cultivators. I quote the following from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*:—

> Indeed, the Bill does away with one of the most valued and sacred rights that the occupancy rayat has acquired under the Bengal Tenancy Act. Under the existing law, the rent recoverable from occupancy rayats must be presumed to be fair and equitable unless the contrary is proved. So, before the rent can be enhanced it must be established by a judicial enquiry that it is not fair or equitable. But the Bill empowers a revenue officer to at once propose a higher rent to the tenant; and, if the latter does not accept it, to enhance it after going through a certain procedure, which is unfettered by judicial control, with a preconceived object in view.
>
> The innovation referred to above is then this: The control of the judicial officers (the Special Judge and the High Court) over the action of the revenue authorities in the matter of settlement of fair rent is proposed to be entirely swept away by the Bill. The High Court strongly objected to this innovation, and so did the Landholders' Associations in Bengal; and the Government has agreed only so far as to modify the Bill in this respect concerning the permanently settled estates.

I gather from the same journal that Sir Alexander Mackenzie proposed to the association of the Bengal landlords the abolition of the operation of the Civil Procedure Code in the settlement of rent, and suggested to the association that both private landlords and Government should employ the services of revenue officers for settlement of rents in their respective estates. The Committee of the B.I. Association thanked the Lieutenant-Governor for his offer, but declined to accept it, preferring the Judicial to the Revenue Officer. On January 11 last, however, the Committee of the B.I. Association retracted what they had stated before, and submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor that "private landlords should be in the same position as the State, and that the procedure proposed for the settlement of rents in Government estates should be open to all private landlords." But Sir Alexander Mackenzie was unable to accept the new proposal of the association. The result is, if I understand rightly, that the settlement of rents in estates owned by private landlords will rest finally with courts of law, while in estates owned by the Government the final decision will rest with Government revenue officers.

If this be the gist of the new law, one must deeply regret it. Where the Government is the landlord, it is virtually one of the parties to a suit relating to rent, and the tenant is the other party. The final decision should therefore rest, not with the Government revenue officer, but with an impartial judicial officer, as has hitherto been the case. To make the decision of the Government revenue officer final in such cases would be like making the decision of a landlord final in suits of rent between the landlord and the tenant.

It also seems to me to be unfair that there should be one law for landlords and tenants in private estates, and another law where the Government is the landlord. Most of the estates in the Province of Bengal belong to private landlords, and forty years ago Lord Canning laid down the principle that enhancements of rent could be allowed only on certain definite and reasonable grounds, and that the decision would rest with courts of law. For forty years the Government itself has submitted to these conditions where Government stood in the position of a landlord; and it is, to say the least, undignified and unjust for the Government to evade these conditions and make a distinct law for its own benefit, making the decisions of its revenue officers final without a possibility of an appeal to courts of law.

That this was painfully felt by the members of the Bengal Council appears from the following extracts from an Indian journal of the proceedings of the Bengal Council:

> The Hon. Kali Churn Banerjea moved that the procedure for settlement of rents and decision of disputes in estates under settlement of land revenue be the same as the procedure for settlement of rents and decision of disputes in permanently settled estates.
>
> His Honour the President ruled the amendment out of order.
>
> The Hon. Norendra Nath Sen moved that after clause (*g*) of section 104H in section 7 of the Bill the following be added, namely: "(*h*) That the alteration made in the existing rent by the revenue officer has not been made in accordance with, or is not justified by, the provisions of this Act regulating such alterations." He said that the one question of the most vital importance to the tenant was the rent which he had to pay, and when this had been enhanced, and as he was not permitted to contest its justice or legality by a regular suit, it would be idle to confer on him the right to bring on matters of far less importance to him. He asked the Council to make this most important concession in favour of the rayat, as it was the only resource open to him against the powers conferred by this Bill on settlement

officers. He would appeal to the sense of justice and fairness of his Honour the President. If the section were not altered, as suggested by him, it would prove a source of great oppression to the rayats.

The Hon. Surendranath Banerjea, who had also given notice of a similar amendment, which he withdrew in favour of Babu Norendra Nath Sen's, said that the question was of vital importance to the rayats. The question was whether the reign of law was to be maintained or the reign of discretion was to prevail. This amendment aimed at maintaining the reign of law and giving the rayats the power to test the correctness of the assessment in a court of law.

The Hon. Mr. Finucane opposed the amendment, as it was directly in conflict with the fundamental principles of the Bill, as sanctioned by the Secretary of State.

Nothing could be more touching and eloquent than the appeal which the Hon. Norendra Nath Sen made "to the sense of justice and fairness of his Honour" the Lieut.-Governor of Bengal. Nothing could be more vigorous and clear than the statement made by the Hon. Surendra Nath Banerjea that the question was whether the reign of law was to be maintained or the reign of the "discretion" of Government executive officers. What was the reply given to these earnest, reasonable, and eloquent appeals? The member in charge of the Bill replied that the proposed amendment was "in conflict with the fundamental principles of the Bill as sanctioned by the Secretary of State." Are not Legislative Councils in India a farce if the principles of Bills affecting the material interests of the millions of cultivators in India are to be settled beforehand in the India Office at Whitehall, and are not to be modified thereafter during their progress through the Councils? What is the good of having Legislative Councils in India, and having members therein elected by the people, if they have not the power to suggest radical modifications in Bills laid before the Councils?

Let me continue my extracts:—

The Hon. S. N. Banerjea: I hope the Council will allow me—

President: Let me point out——

The Hon. S. N. Banerjea: As these remarks are personal, I think, sir, I am entitled to speak.

President: Will you please sit down?

Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea resumed his seat.

His Honour the President observed that as the modifications of the Bill with regard to this matter were referred to the Select Committee without being brought before the Council, the hon. members were perfectly justified in discussing the point, and he could not say that their observations on it were all out of order. As regards the amendment he would say that the section did not affect the rayats of the permanently settled districts, where the existing arrangement would prevail.

The amendment was lost.

Passing over the amusing passage at arms between the Hon. Surendra Nath Banerjea and His Honour the Lieut.-Governor, one finds in the end that the reason for which the Lieut.-Governor refused to amend the section was that "the section did not affect the rayats of the permanently settled districts," or, in other words, districts in which the landlords are private individuals. To me this appears an extremely bad reason; for what is good enough for private landlords ought to be good enough for the Government as landlord. To have an exceptional section for the benefit of the Government as landlord in unfair and inequitable.

One more good fight was made on behalf of the cultivators:—

The Hon. Jatra Mohan Sen moved that at the end of sub-section (1) of section 9 of the Bill, the following be added, namely: "Provided also that a suit may, within three years from the commencement of this Act, be instituted in a competent Civil Court to contest the correctness of any settlement of rent made in an uncontested case, or the correctness of any decision of a dispute."

It is needless to say that this motion also was lost. And the new law has been passed giving exceptional powers to the Government as landlords—powers which are denied to private landlords in Bengal.

One must deeply deplore this invidious and inequitable distinction. So long as the Government made itself subject to the decision of courts of law in questions of rent between itself and its tenants, it gained in prestige and in its reputation for justice. The millions of cultivators of Bengal felt, and felt with gratitude and admiration, that the *Sarkar Bahadur* did not place itself above the courts of justice, and that the courts of justice were righteous and fearless, and would give a verdict against the *Sarkar Bahadur* if its claim was unjust. It is unwise and it is dangerous in India to allow to the millions a good and plausible ground for saying that the *Sarkar Bahadur* has now placed itself above courts of justice; that while courts decide the rental of private landlords, the *Sarkar Bahadur* as landlord realises from its tenants what rents it chooses to demand.

It is sad to contemplate how many of the old safeguards for good government have been swept away within the last two years, and how repressive and retrograde legislation is swamping the very foundations of a wise and just system of administration. We have seen the law of sedition altered in India, and a new law passed, which for its vagueness and its Dracoman severity has shocked public feeling in England and in India. We have seen the rights of municipal self-government being tampered with in Calcutta, in Madras, and in Bombay, under the idea—which our own experience tells us is false—that a few nominated workers can or will work more zealously than the elected representatives of the people. And, lastly, we find a new rent law passed for Bengal which withdraws from tenants in Government estates those cherished rights which they have enjoyed for the last forty years of appealing to courts of law for the final settlements of the rent—rights which their brother tenants living in private estates are still allowed to enjoy. Those who think that this series of retrograde, unwise, and mischievous laws is strengthening British rule in India are mistaken. Such laws, unsympathetic and uncalled for, are alienating the sympathies of moderate and sensible men in India, and are creating a mischievous impression that British rule in India has broken away from its past traditions, and is becoming arbitrary and despotic day by day. Such laws, forced down the throats of the people against their wishes and in spite of their protests, are weakening British rule in India and alienating the affections of the people. India is "a vast whispering gallery," as an able speaker lately said in the House of Commons, and every piece of unwise and retrograde legislation, withdrawing rights which were granted by wise administrators in the past, creates a feeling of dissatisfaction and distrust which spreads from one end of the country to the other, which is discussed in town and village, which embitters the feelings of the people. Never was there a time within the memory of the present generation when the rights and privileges enjoyed by the Indian subjects of her Majesty were so rapidly and recklessly withdrawn by a succession of coercive, retrograde, and repressive laws. And never was there a period when the confidence of the Indian nation in the justice, the benevolence, and the good government of British rulers was so rudely shaken as at the present moment. We appeal to wise administrators to stop further mischief, and to shape legislation in the future, as has been done in the past, with some regard for the feelings and the wishes of the people.

LAND REVENUE POLICY IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY.—II.

By G. Vencataratnam.
(*President, Godavari District Association.*)

THAT it is the declared policy of the Government of Madras not to disturb the existing classification of soils, but to revise the assessments solely with reference to changes in prices, appears from the provisions of the Settlement Manual, from the Board's Standing Orders, from the orders of the Government on the report of the Agricultural Committee of 1888-89, and from the orders passed on the Memorandum on the progress of the Madras Presidency during the last forty years. Under paragraph 4, Section 1, of the Board's Standing Orders, collectors of districts were expressly authorised to notify in the district gazettes, which they did, that the settlement rates would be liable to revision after thirty years' duration, and further to explain to the rayats that there would be no re-classification of soils or calculation of fresh grain values, but that the rates of assessment would be revised entirely with reference to prices. In G. O., No. 315 Revenue, dated July 4, 1889, the Government declared that there was no necessity for embodying these principles in a legislative enactment, since they were very clearly stated in the Settlement Manual. In reply to a reference made by the Government of India in 1883, the Government of Madras expressed itself in favour of the principle that increase of prices should alone be considered in future revisions of settlement in districts in which the revenue had been adequately assessed, and added that "such districts will be those which have been surveyed, and in which the assessments have been fixed by the settlement

department." Does not every consideration of justice, expediency, policy, and common sense dictate to the Government to carry out these assurances and declarations in the sense in which they were understood by the persons to whom they were addressed? We find, however, that the Government of Madras has, in violation of these solemn pledges, ordered a re-classification of soils in connexion with the revision settlements of the Trichinopoly, Godavari, and Kistna districts—*districts which were declared in* 1883 *to have been adequately assessed.* The altered policy can only be admired from the Government point of view as a rich source of revenue. Its effect would not be merely to shake the confidence of her Majesty's subjects in the promises and pledges made by her local representatives, but also to ruin the few who have prospered under British rule, and make the amount of the misery of the country even greater than at present. Nothing is more remarkable than the spirit in which Government officers as a mass regard the revenue. As a rule, even the most indifferent are zealous when the revenue is concerned, and questions involving loss or gain of revenue are rarely approached without a bias in favour of Government. It is, however, a great consolation to find the Hon. Mr. Crole, the first member of the Board of Revenue, protesting against this policy in the strongest possible terms from his place in the Legislative Council. "The original principles," says Mr. Crole,

> which underlay the benign regulations of 1856, and which are the foundation of the settlement operations in the Madras Presidency, were totally departed from in all the orders of the Government of India from 1893. Having made that declaration, I will go one step further and say that it appears to me it is utterly useless for us to destroy the property, to at all events imperil the property, of our rayats by clipping the increased assessments, as we have been doing lately, to the extent of 34 and 33 lakhs. I believe in Godavari and Kistna the increase will be 26 per cent. on the settlement of thirty years ago, for the benefit, not of our own rayats, not of our own population, not of our own administration, but of persons over whom we have no control and who are administering the affairs of this country quite beyond our ken. It seems to me that just in the beginning of the century the permanent settlement not only settled permanent tenure upon those persons who are now called Zemindars, but also established the fixity of assessments, and as a right the rayat had fixity of assessment and permanent hereditary proprietary rights of the soil. And so it was never intended that our rayats should have their property imperilled, destroyed and whittled away by constantly increasing the demands upon them for revenue. It stands to reason that, if a man is to look forward at the end of thirty years even to an increase of assessment on his property by one-third, he cannot in any sense be considered to be the owner of that property. To my mind it is an inevitable conclusion that the proprietary right is incompatible with such increases. The resources of Government ought to be increased not by crippling the private property, but by increasing local taxation to meet local wants.

In this connexion it is to be remembered that, when the principle regulating the share of the net produce which was to represent the land tax was settled in 1856, it was intended that the charges for the maintenance of roads and of village establishments should he met out of the Government assessment, and accordingly it was declared that the assessment included a percentage set apart for these purposes. The original principle has since so far been departed from by the development of the system of local taxation, that, as regards the local land cess and the village service cess, the charges which it was intended should be met from the Government share of the produce are now practically met out of the rayat's share, thereby reducing it from ½ to ⅜.

The Government takes shelter under a despatch of the Secretary of State dated January 8, 1885. But the Government of India admits that "in disposing of the matter in question the Secretary of State did not in any way express his disapproval of previous declarations and pledges on the part of the Madras Government on the subject of the settlement of land revenue in that Presidency, since he did not discuss any such declarations or pledges." In fact "no proposals other than those contained in the Madras Government orders, Nos. 975 and 976, dated August 10, 1883, were put forward for the Madras Presidency either by the Madras Government or any other competent authority acting on its behalf," and no order was even issued by the Secretary of State to communicate to the Madras Government the despatch referred to, which appears to relate solely to the North-West Provinces in which there were no prior pledges or declarations of policy. Moreover, different systems of tenure prevail in Northern and Southern India. "It is important," as remarked by the Famine Commissioners, "to bear this distinction in mind, as misconception has arisen from confounding the independent landholder of the South, such as the Bombay or Madras rayat, with the tenant of the North, often holding his land at a rack-rent and with no permanent interest in the land, who also passes under the same name. The tenure of the Government rayat of Southern India is as secure and simple as can well be conceived. The Famine Commissioners have accordingly stated in their report that in the revision operations in the Madras Presidency the only part of the assessment to be revised should be the valuation of the average out-turn per acre. The despatch in question does not affect the Madras rayatwari system, any more than it affects the Bombay system. As the system of land tenure in British India varies in different provinces, all that the Secretary of State did was that he laid down the general lines of policy, leaving large discretion to local Governments. Nothing could have been further from his intention than that districts like Godavari and Kistna, which were admitted to have been adequately assessed, should be subjected, as they are now subjected, to all the evils attending fresh appraisements. Curiously enough, the Government withholds the knowledge of the contents of the despatch from the public. If the Government cannot make up its mind to redeem its pledges for granting permanent settlement to Madras, we ask at least for the restitution of the policy that has long been accepted by Government and the people—a policy which has sprung out of the character and traditions of the rayatwari tenure appertaining to Southern India, and whose reversal has created an universal and deep discontent in the minds of the masses. In doing so, we are not asking the Government to sacrifice any portion of the revenue to which it is justly entitled. All that we ask is that the process of fresh classification of soils and revaluation of grain outturns may be eliminated altogether from revision settlements, and that such settlements should proceed upon some known and defined principles. Assessments based on such principles would be much more effectual than all other measures combined in promoting the improvement both of the country and of the people. We appeal to the Secretary of State to fulfil the pledges above referred to, and restore the confidence of the people in the justice and fair play of the Government.

THE WEEK IN PARLIAMENT.

BY OUR OWN ONLOOKER.

FRIDAY'S debate on our policy or want of policy in the Far East has been, I suppose, described as "a great debate" because it stands out prominently in a Session which has been distinguished by the infinitely little. It was to some extent an interesting debate, because of the big issues it raised, and because there is always an interest in getting a peep behind the scenes and observing the diplomatic conflicts between vast empires. The collection of papers known as "the Blue (Funk) Book" had been long expected, and it provided but sorry reading when it appeared. Sir William Harcourt began the debate in a speech of more than an hour's length, which was a running commentary on the various despatches and reports. He submitted no motion, but just called attention to this, that, and the other. And that is quite enough in a case of this sort. One has merely to read some of Lord Salisbury's own despatches and memoranda, without argument or comment, in order to condemn his Government.

The one point upon which the popular imagination will seize chiefly is the wretched business about our ships and Port Arthur. The Tories sat very glum when that was being explained to the House. The history of the incident is this. Russia wanted Port Arthur, and has wanted it for years, as everyone knew except the pensive recluses of Downing Street. Nay, it is not unreasonable that she should want it and that she should have it. But the Government has managed, or rather mismanaged, things so that it looks as though we tried to keep Russia out of Port Arthur, and that she took it in spite of us. She sent vessels there, explaining that they had just called in to winter. Our admiral sent some of ours, as he was entitled to do under existing treaties. The Russians immediately complained to Lord Salisbury, and his conduct was deplorable. He said he had not ordered the vessels to Port Arthur, that the admiral must have sent them, and that

no doubt they would soon be removed. They were—with the result that in every paper in Russia and in China it was announced that Russia had bundled us out of Port Arthur. So much for keeping up our "prestige" in the Far East.

Mr. Balfour seemed to know that he had a desperate case when he rose to reply to Sir William Harcourt. By common consent the first part of his speech was of the poorest and thinnest quality. There was something pathetic in the way in which he almost begged for cheers from his followers. They sat sulky and silent, and their general frigidity was made the more apparent by an occasional chirp of applause from some young private secretary sitting behind the Ministers. Mr. Chamberlain sat still and apparently asleep, but he was wide enough awake, and was probably enjoying the floundering mess of his "leader." I have said everyone agrees that the first part of Mr. Balfour's speech was lamentable. I candidly acknowledge that not a few say that its conclusion was brilliant and even triumphant, and that it roused the Tories to enthusiasm. I can pronounce definitely upon the last statement. It did nothing of the sort; the Tories sulked to the end. As to the "brilliance" and "triumph," this is a matter of opinion, and I can only express my own view, which is that the last part of the speech was worse than the first.

Its most noticeable points were a querulous complaint about the constant fire of question and of comment which assails British Governments in their attempts to guide the foreign policy of the country. Never was a more ungrounded assertion made or even hinted at. The Opposition has been extremely forbearing—far too forbearing, I think. Then Mr. Balfour went on openly to lament that Russia had no such hindrances, nor had France or Germany. It was an audacious line to take, but the leader of the House of Commons was from his place at the Table openly yearning after Russian methods of government! I don't see anything triumphant or brilliant in that. Another specimen of this closing part of his speech may be given. He said that some critics had asserted that during the last seven months Russia had had an unbroken series of diplomatic triumphs, and we had had an unbroken series of diplomatic defeats, and then he added emphatically, "the very reverse of that is the truth." One need not argue with a man who says that in China we have had our own way continually during the last seven months and Russia has been constantly baffled. The statement is too silly for argument, and yet this is the sort of stuff of which what has been called the "brilliant part" of his speech was formed.

Lord Charles Beresford made a breezy free-and-easy attack on the Government; Sir Charles Dilke tackled them with the deadly precision of the old Foreign Office expert; and Sir Edward Grey made a speech which was to some extent damaging, but which was weakened by his passion for ultra-impartiality—for saving parentheses and tempered phrases. There is generally a touch of comic relief in House of Commons proceedings as in other tragic entertainments. It was provided on Friday by the constant "bobbing up" of Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, with flushed face and in expansive dinner dress trying to get a word in. Many were called before he was chosen at the very end of the sitting, and his thunders had scarcely commenced before the more welcome boom of Big Ben could be heard, which stilled the voice of the orator and left the debate adjourned.

The greater part of the sittings in these days is devoted to the consideration of the Irish Local Government Bill in Committee, a process of no little importance to the people of Ireland, but one which cannot possibly be made interesting or even intelligible in a sketch. One thing is clear, and that is that Mr. Tim Healy has lost none of his wonderful power of mastering intricate detail and of uttering biting and telling sarcasms. Night after night, from his well-known corner, he has poured contempt upon English methods in Ireland, especially as evidenced in the doings of the glorified flunkeys in what he calls "that ancient hostelry, Dublin Castle."

It is possible that some newspaper readers have been puzzled as to why Mr. Gibson Bowles, on Monday night, seized upon such a commonplace incident as the removal of the name of Mr. Macdona from the Petroleum Committee, to make a savage attack upon that somewhat commonplace member. And it may not be clear to the outsider why the House roared with laughter and cheers, before Mr. Bowles had uttered a word. This is the explanation. There are certain favourite corner seats in the House which are by custom, but not by right, reserved to certain members. Thus Sir John Mowbray, Mr. John Ellis, Mr. Labouchere, and Mr. James Lowther, always have their corners unquestioningly yielded to them. Hitherto Mr. Gibson Bowles has been one of the favoured few. But this Session there has been a concerted movement to deprive him of the usufruct of the corner behind his old friend Mr. Hanbury. One of the alien powers which has seized upon this parliamentary Wei-hai-wei is Mr. Macdona, the private secretary to the Secretary to the Treasury. Mr. Macdona was sitting in the envied corner when Mr. Bowles jumped up in a place far removed from his old haunt, hence the delighted cheers and laughter. They were increased, too, when Mr. Bowles proceeded to refer to his enemy as "the hon. and reverend member." Mr. Macdona was once a curate, it seems, but by the aid of some Act of Parliament he became a layman again. On Tuesday Mr. Bowles had some question to put, and once again he had a fine reception, for with characteristic smartness he had run the blockade and entered the desired haven. When, therefore, the members saw that the little sparrow had ousted the big cuckoo, they cheered loud and long. Only those who know the House of Commons can understand how these little incidents interest our grave and reverend senators.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

"LAND REVENUE POLICY IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY."

To the Editor of "India."

Sir,—There is an old saying that the devil even should be given his due, and, as you will not accuse me of being lenient to the faults of the Madras land revenue system, I write to point out the fallacy that lies at the root of the *exposé* of the "Land Revenue Policy in the Madras Presidency.—I.," by G. Vencataratnam, contained in your issue of the 29th ult., in the words, "Re-classification of soils is nothing less and nothing more than taxation of rayats' improvements." Far from such being the case, it is to me the first sign that the Madras Government are only now beginning to awake to a consciousness of the faultiness of the existing land revenue settlements. *Pace* the Madras Agricultural Committee (who that august body may be I am not aware), a re-valuation of soils would not be fatal to improvement, but would afford an opportunity not only for setting to rights any mistakes that may have been made in this respect in the past, but also for preventing the possibility of their occurring in the future. If on a revision of existing assessments a field is discovered to have been assessed at wet-crop rates owing to irrigation having been provided for them at the expense of the rayat, it can, and no doubt will, be re-assessed at dry-crop rates, because the improvement has been brought about by him; and once entered as dry-crop land, it can never again be mistakenly classified as wet-crop for that simple reason.

A re-classification of soils is absolutely necessary in Madras to rectify the inequalities of assessment brought about by the futile attempt to ascertain the actual produce of each field, and assess it accordingly. I have officially exposed the absurdity of this attempt and the consequence arising from it in the fact of thousands of evictions annually for non-payment of rent and millions of acres of arable land lying waste; but the details of my objections and of my proposed remedies would not only take up too much of your space, but would be too technical for the general public to understand. The inequalities of assessment having been brought fully to the notice of the Madras Government by their own officers as well as by me, it is their bounden duty to remedy the defects at any revision of assessment that takes place. I cannot see, therefore, that a re-classification need be irritating, burdensome, and demoralising, as Mr. Vencataratnam says they would be; to provide remedies for an existing injustice can never be this. If by demoralising your correspondent means to hint at the corruption of Native subordinates in carrying out the necessary detailed valuation of soils, those concerned have themselves to thank if they do not bring such malpractices to the notice of the superior authorities in order to have them instantly put a stop to. Unless the value of fields relatively to each other in their intrinsic natural capabilities is fixed, at all events approximately, by a classification of their soils, there cannot be a fair assessment made. The attempt to do this according to actual produce when other factors, such as the relative agricultural skill of cultivators, come into play which vitiate valuations so made, has already failed, and perpetuates the injustice already done; and it can only be a man who takes a one-sided view of

the matter who can object to the liberty reserved to themselves by the Madras Government to re-classify soils where such injustice is found to exist.—Yours, etc.,

A. Rogers,
Late Bombay C.S.

May 2, 1898.

THE WORK OF THE LONDON INDIAN SOCIETY.

To the Editor of "India."

Sir,—I enclose a circular which is being sent out to India. Subscriptions and donations, however small, will be thankfully received. All such money will be strictly set aside for this object alone. Cheques and money orders may either be sent to Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, 72, Anerley Park, London, S.E., or to the undersigned at the address given below.—Yours, etc.,

Sarat Mullick.

London National Hospital, Soho Square, W.
April 30, 1898.

[Circular.]

London National Hospital, Soho Square,
London, W.

Sir,—Many cases are on record in which Indians coming to Great Britain have experienced considerable difficulty as regards their course of study, board and lodgings, etc. The London Indian Society, which does not pledge itself to any political party either in India or in England, has appointed a committee to help Indians in any way it can. Gentlemen sending five annas in stamps, for postage, will be provided with all information. On getting a fortnight's notice one of the members of the committee will meet gentlemen at any of the railway stations in London, and find out suitable residence and help them generally. The Society has corresponding members in Edinburgh, Oxford, Cambridge and other towns, who in a similar manner will help gentlemen proceeding to those places.

The work of the committee will be purely gratuitous. But gentlemen are kindly requested to do all they can to further the objects of the committee by helping others in their turn, and thus making the work of the committee enduring and efficient.

Sarat Mullick, *Hon. Sec.*

INDIA AND THE "REVIEW OF REVIEWS."

To the Editor of "India."

Sir,—Thanks for the insertion of my letter of the 23rd ult. I know that the point of your leaderette was that, as Indian matters are not to be freely discussed in India, it will be well to get them discussed in Britain, especially as that will bring them under the eyes of the British public, which is at present profoundly ignorant of them. The point of my deprecatory letter is that, as you brought in the name of Mr. Stead and his paper as a vehicle for this airing of Indian matter, I wished to protest against Indian "wrongs" appearing before the British public under the championship of one who glorifies South African "wrongs," and patronises the present-day "Warren Hastings" of that colony. This would make it appear as if the best and foremost Indians do not care for Right—but only for their *own* "rights." Such an attitude might cost them some British sympathy which would be worth having. I give this explanation as I do not seem to have made my meaning quite clear. The British Press can surely furnish India with some mouthpiece which holds principles of universal justice, and does not merely blow with any wind of opportunism.—Yours, etc.,

George Ferdinands (M.D.).

Aberdeen, *April* 30, 1898.

CHRONICLE OF THE WEEK.

Thursday, April 28.—Later reports of the bombardment of Matanzas showed that the engagement lasted only a short time, as the Spanish batteries were soon silenced, and not one of their shots struck the American ships. The fire of the latter reduced the batteries on both sides of the harbour to ruin. A Spanish version of the affair published in Madrid stated that some of the defenders were killed and a certain amount of damage was done in the town; the losses of the Americans, it was added, were not known. An official despatch from Cuba alleged that the American ironclads, after half-an-hour's fighting, "have been obliged to withdraw from before Matanzas."—From New York it was stated that preparations had been completed for bombarding Havana, or some point in the immediate neighbourhood of that city; and while General Blanco's attention was concentrated on this operation, a port selected as a military base would be attacked and, it was hoped, captured by the insurgents supported by American marines. An army would then be hurried from the United States to hold and fortify this port, from which munitions of war and other necessary supplies would be conveyed to the insurgents, prior to a regular attack on Havana.—A Spanish steamer, carrying treasure and supplies for the Spanish garrison in Cuba, was captured by the American monitor "Terror" off Cardenas on Wednesday. The estimated value of ship and cargo was $400,000.

Friday, April 29.—The Spanish squadron which had been lying at St. Vincent, consisting of three cruisers, three torpedo-boat destroyers, and three torpedo-boats, sailed early this morning. According to one account it took a southerly course, while another report stated that the cruisers and destroyers steered westward, and the other vessels northward. It was understood that they carried sealed orders, which would be opened when they were at sea. The torpedo-boats afterwards returned to harbour, in consequence of a collision between two of them, but were to sail again on Saturday.—Nothing of importance was reported as to the operations of the blockading squadron off Havana. Madrid telegrams officially confirmed the bombardment of Matanzas, but asserted that there was no loss of life among the Spanish troops, though a mule on one of the batteries was killed. General Blanco reported that an American ironclad went ashore on the coast of the province of Pinar del Rio. The story was not confirmed from any other source.—More than 400 German, British, Cuban, and American refugees from Santiago de Cuba were landed in Jamaica to-day by the German steamer "Remus." They reported that all food supplies in Santiago had been seized by the Spaniards for the use of the army, and that the inhabitants were almost entirely destitute of the necessaries of life. The activity of the insurgents had greatly increased, and they were raiding the outworks of the town.—According to the Washington Correspondent of the *New York Herald*, Rear-Admiral Sampson had no direct orders to bombard Matanzas, but acted under instructions given him some days ago to reply to any batteries, except those of Havana and one or two other points, which fired on his ships.—In the Cortes, in Madrid, to-day, the Minister of War, in reply to questions, gave the substance of the official reports as to the bombardment of the Matanzas forts, and added that simultaneously with the bombardment the insurgents advanced on Matanzas, but were completely routed.—The House of Representatives passed the War Revenue Bill by 181 votes to 129. Preparations were being pushed forward by the War Department in Washington for the despatch of the projected military expedition to Cuba, and eight large steamers had been chartered for the conveyance of the troops.

From Tokio it was reported that Japan had acquired the new Seoul and Chemulpho Railway in Korea. A Russo-Japanese protocol had been concluded which guaranteed Japan a free hand in industrial and commercial enterprises in Korea, and pledged the two Powers to notify each other before sending experts to that country.

Saturday, April 30.—It was officially announced in Calcutta that the plague had reached that city. Up to the present 28 cases and 13 deaths had been announced. There was a great exodus from the city.

Sunday, May 1.—Private and official telegrams received in Madrid this evening stated that the American squadron appeared early this morning off the Bay of Manila and opened a heavy cannonade against the Spanish squadron and the forts protecting the harbour. After an engagement in which one Spanish vessel was burned and another sustained severe damage, the American squadron, which had also suffered much damage, retired, but a second engagement followed, in which the American ships again suffered considerable loss, while two Spanish warships were badly damaged. The conflict, which was described as terrible, resulted in the defeat of the Spanish fleet. An official despatch received later confirmed this report, and stated that three Spanish ships were destroyed in action, and the rest had to retire from the combat, some being sunk. It seemed certain that if the war continued much longer, somebody would get hurt.—No further news of importance was received from the blockading squadron off the Cuban coast.—The public excitement in Spain evoked by the beginning of hostilities had now subsided.—It was thought that the Spanish squadron which left St. Vincent on Friday was steaming westward, and would probably be next heard of at Puerto Rico.—The British Consul at Santiago de Cuba had cabled to the authorities at Jamaica to send down a warship to take him off as his life was in danger. The "Pallas" was despatched for the purpose.

The following bulletin was issued at Hawarden: "There is no material change in Mr. Gladstone's condition since this day week. There is a slow advance in the local malady. He has still at times a considerable amount of pain, but is easier this afternoon."

Monday, May 2.—Although no detailed report of the battle of Manila had yet been received from any source, it was acknowledged in the brief account of the action sent by Admiral Montojo to the Madrid Government, that the Spanish squadron was practically annihilated. The American squadron entered the Bay of Manila on Saturday night, and opened fire on the Spanish ships collected off Cavite, before daybreak on Sunday. The larger vessels of the Spanish squadron appeared to have been successively set on fire or blown up, and the smaller ones retreated into Bakor Bay, some of them being sunk in order to prevent their falling into the hands of the Americans. The extent of the loss and damage sustained by the latter was not yet known, but none of their ships seemed to have been put *hors de combat*, and rumours were in circulation in Madrid to-night that Admiral Dewey had begun the bom-

bardment of both Manila and Cavite, that the latter place had been destroyed, and that the unfortified portion of Manila was in flames. The news of the disaster produced much excitement in Madrid, but hitherto there had been no disturbance. In the United States the result of the action was hailed as a decisive victory, and evoked considerable elation. The first impartial account of the battle received by the Washington Government was a telegram forwarded by the British Foreign Office from her Majesty's Consul at Manila.—The Navy Department in Washington, being satisfied that the Spanish fleet from St. Vincent was on its way to Puerto Rico, was taking measures accordingly. A junction between the North Atlantic and flying squadrons was to be effected as soon as a base of operations was secured in Cuba, and swift auxiliary cruisers were being sent on scouting duty in the vicinity of Puerto Rico.—The concentration at Tampa and other points in Florida of troops intended to take part in the Cuban expedition continued.—From New York it was reported that the proposal for increased tonnage dues would be struck out of the Dingley Revenue Bill by the Senate Finance Committee.

TUESDAY, May 3.—It was reported from New York that orders had been issued for the immediate despatch from San Francisco of supplies of coal for the Manila squadron, while the Washington Government was said to have also decided that a considerable body of troops should be despatched to the Philippines for the purpose of maintaining order and holding the islands. The expeditionary force at Tampa, now ready to embark for Cuba, was to be commanded by General Shafter, and consisted of about 6,000 men of all arms. Martial law was proclaimed in Madrid on Monday night. The city was quiet to-day, but the excitement was great, and much interest was felt in the proceedings of the Cortes, where the Government policy was to be attacked in both Houses. Uneasiness as to the fate of the Spanish dynasty was said to be felt in Vienna in consequence of the American victory in the Philippines.

The bulletin at Hawarden Castle this evening was as follows: "To-day Mr. Gladstone is distinctly easier. There has been little or no pain during the last twenty-four hours, and sleep has been good."

Mr. Kruger, in opening the Transvaal Volksraad on Monday, was reported to have referred to the difference of opinion between Great Britain and the Republic respecting international relations, and expressed a hope that correspondence would lead to a satisfactory conclusion of the matter.

WEDNESDAY, May 4.—It was understood that the Washington Government intended to delay the projected expedition to Cuba till the Spanish squadron now on its way across the Atlantic had been met and, it was hoped, defeated; and it seemed possible that the lighter vessels of Rear-Admiral Sampson's command would be left to maintain the blockade while all the armoured vessels and larger cruisers were withdrawn to unite with the flying squadron for operations against the Spanish fleet. Four fast auxiliary cruisers were now scouting in the Atlantic in search of the latter.—The American gunboat "Wilmington" was reported to have destroyed on Tuesday a Spanish fort which was being erected near Cojimar.—There was a lively debate in the Chamber of Deputies in Madrid on Tuesday on the events in the Philippines, in the course of which Señor Salmeron (Republican) made a vehement attack on the Government and the Monarchical *régime*. Señor Sagasta made a vigorous reply. The Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne was passed without discussion. Some patriotic speeches were delivered in the Senate. — Disturbances had broken out in several provincial towns in Spain, and a state of siege was proclaimed in some places. Madrid had thus far remained quiet.—The Paris journals most friendly to Spain were now advising her to make the sacrifice which was, in any case, inevitable, and proclaim the freedom of Cuba.

Lord Salisbury, speaking at the annual meeting of the Primrose League, endeavoured to defend his policy in the Far East against the attacks of his "supporters." The *Times*, however, said that the speech was "not calculated to diminish the growing uneasiness with which his continued tenure of the Foreign Office along with the Premiership is contemplated;" and the *Standard* described Lord Salisbury's defence as "little better than an elaborate missing of the points."

Mr. Bryce, M.P., speaking at the annual meeting of the City of London Liberal Association, criticised the vacillation, timidity, and feebleness which, he showed, had characterised the policy of the present Government in the Far East.

THE COMMITTEE ON CURRENCY.

The following letter has been addressed by Lord George Hamilton to Sir Henry Fowler:—

India Office, April 29.

Sir,—I enclose for your perusal a copy of a letter recently received from the Government of India on the subject of the measures to be taken for making effective the policy adopted by her Majesty's Government in 1893, and initiated by the closing of the Indian mints. I also enclose a copy of my reply.

You are aware of the fact that the adoption of this policy followed upon an exhaustive enquiry by a committee presided over by Lord Herschell, and that copies of the report of that committee, of the evidence taken by it, and of the consequent correspondence between the Secretary of State for India in Council and the Government of India, were laid before Parliament. You are also aware that in the autumn of 1897 proposals for an international agreement affecting the currency of India were under the consideration of her Majesty's Government; and that a correspondence on the subject, including a very important letter from the Government of India, was published as a Parliamentary paper as soon as a decision had been arrived at. To all these documents I would invite your special attention.

In consideration of the very great importance of the subject of the Government of India's proposals, it has been decided to refer them to a committee, which will consider whether the object which the Government of India have in view can best be attained by the measures which they suggest or otherwise. It will be the duty of the committee to deliberate, and report to me upon these proposals, and upon any other matter which they may regard as relevant thereto, including the monetary system now in force in India, and the probable effect of any proposed changes upon the internal trade and taxation of that country; and to submit any modifications of the proposals of the Indian Government, or any suggestions of their own, which they may think advisable for the establishment of a satisfactory system of currency in India, and for securing as far as is practicable a stable exchange between that country and the United Kingdom.

The committee will meet in this office, and, in accordance with the precedent of 1892-93, its proceedings, so long as it is in session, will, for obvious reasons, not be open to the public, though they will be published when its labours are over, with the evidence and information it has collected. Subject to this condition, it will be at liberty to act as its members may think most desirable for the attainment of the end in view.

You will observe that, in my despatch of April 7, 1898, I have assured the Government of India that no effort would be wanting, either on the part of the committee or on that of her Majesty's Government, to arrive at a speedy decision; and I trust that the committee will accordingly avoid all unnecessary delay, and will confine their enquiry strictly to such matters as they may deem relevant to the questions under consideration.

You have already intimated to me your willingness to accede to my request that you would act as chairman of this committee, which will be constituted as follows:—

The Right Hon. Sir Henry H. Fowler, G.C.S.I., M.P., chairman;

The Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Secretary for Scotland;

Sir John Muir, Bart., lately Lord Provost of Glasgow;

Sir Francis Mowatt, K.C.B., Secretary to the Treasury;

Sir David Barbour, K.C.S.I., lately Financial Member of the Council of the Governor-General of India;

Sir Charles Crosthwaite, K.C.S.I., member of the Council of India;

Mr. F. C. Le Marchant, member of the Council of India;

Mr. Everard Hambro, a director of the Bank of England;

Mr. W. H. Holland, president of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce;

Mr. Robert Campbell, general manager of the National Bank of India; and

Sir Alfred Dent, K.C.M.G.

Mr. Robert Chalmers, of her Majesty's Treasury, will act as secretary to the committee.

I shall be prepared, on receiving your report, to give it my most careful and prompt consideration.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

GEORGE HAMILTON.

The Right Hon. Sir Henry H. Fowler, G.C.S.I., M.P., etc.

It is stated that the preliminary meeting of the committee will be held on Monday next, when the method of procedure to be observed in the taking of evidence will be agreed upon. Inasmuch as some witnesses from India will have to be called, the enquiry must last some months.

THE OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

There was issued on Monday a Blue-book containing correspondence with reference to the proposals on currency made by the Government of India. The document opens with a long despatch from the Government of India to the Secretary of State, which describes in detail the effects of the closing of the Indian mints, and the necessity of taking active measures to secure the main object of that policy—the establishment of a gold standard in India. The despatch says:—

"Our experience since 1893 has put beyond doubt one of the main principles upon which the legislation of that year was based—a principle which was challenged at the time—namely, that a contraction in the volume of our silver currency, with reference to the demands of trade, has the direct effect of raising its exchangeable value in relation to gold. Before 1893, while the mints were yet open, the value of the rupee as measured in gold continually declined with the decline in the

value of silver; but since 1893, although the value of silver as a metal has continued, speaking generally, to decrease, the decrease in the value of the rupee has been arrested. The main difference in the conditions of the two periods was that before 1893 the amount of coin in circulation was allowed to increase automatically so as to be sufficient to meet the demands of trade at its reduced value, while since 1893, this automatic increase being stopped, the value of the rupee has been determined rather by the amount of coinage in circulation than by its intrinsic worth. We are justified in coming to the conclusion that, if the measures taken in 1893 had been taken at an earlier date, and the increase which took place in the amount of coin in circulation for some years before 1893 had been prevented, the rupee would never have fallen so low in value as sixteenpence. It would follow from this that if we could now restore the circulation to the condition in which it was a few years before 1893, and could in some way reverse the increase of circulation which has immediately taken place, we should effect the object of raising the value to at least sixteenpence."

To accomplish this purpose the Government of India propose as their first step to obtain a reserve of actual gold coin, which can only be done by borrowing in England :—

"Our proposal is that her Majesty's Government should move Parliament to pass an Act giving the Secretary of State power to borrow up to a maximum of £20,000,000 for the purpose of establishing a gold standard in India. It is possible that the whole of this amount may not be required, but we believe that the possession of the power to push our efforts in the direction we indicate until our object is attained will greatly enhance the effect of our first more limited operations. The amount which may actually be required in order to establish exchange steadily at the level of sixteenpence the rupee, can, as we have already said, only be determined by experience, and we have named as the maximum to which borrowing powers should be taken an amount which, we may take it, is certainly sufficient, and the interest on which the revenues of India can afford to pay. We think it most desirable that the maximum should be so fixed as to avoid any risk of having to move Parliament a second time for further borrowing powers; and the Act should provide that the borrowing shall be in such instalments as may be deemed desirable by the Secretary of State, and should require the Secretary of State to ship to India immediately in sovereigns the amounts borrowed under the powers."

This suggested borrowing is to be kept distinct from the Secretary of State's general borrowing powers, and the despatch asks that as soon as the Statute shall be passed the Secretary of State should at once borrow and ship to India five million pounds in gold, the sovereigns to be placed in the Reserve Treasuries and held ready for such use as events may show to be expedient. The first use to which the money would be applied would be to meet deficiencies in the balances caused by the sale of silver. In course of time, the writers of the despatch contend, the exchange rate would reach sixteenpence, and would be stable at that, the sovereign being a recognised coin, at least in the chief cities of India. It is argued that the measures suggested would have the effect of reversing the influence of the distrust in the future of the rupee, which at present not only prevents the importation of gold to meet the demands of trade, notwithstanding the much higher rate of discount and interest prevailing in India, but also keeps sterling capital out of India. The despatch afterwards goes on to consider the scheme for the creation of a gold standard, associated with the names of Mr. A. M. Lindsay and Mr. L. C. Probyn—the essence of the latter's proposal being that, in order to prevent the gold disappearing into private hoards (an object also kept in view by Mr. Lindsay), the metal should be kept in stamped bars of a high value.

There are various documents enclosed with the despatch describing and relating to Mr. Lindsay's scheme. But interest centres in the despatch of the Secretary of State referring the entire subject to the Committee just appointed. This despatch is dated April 7, and, after expressing agreement with the policy of establishing a gold standard, says:—

"I concur in the view expressed by your Excellency's Government that any attempt to return to the state of things which existed previously to the closing of the mints is practically out of the question. It remains, therefore, to be decided whether the objects of your Government can best be attained by the scheme which you have put forward, or otherwise. I have no intention at the present moment of making any comment upon your proposals, with the nature of which, as you are aware, I only became acquainted on the receipt of your letter above-mentioned. Your Excellency must, however, be conscious, as I am, that they contain suggestions upon matters which have been the subject of much difference of opinion, and that, in view of the gravity of the issues involved, a final decision upon them can only be arrived at after a patient and thorough investigation by the highest available authorities. I propose, therefore, to refer the whole matter to a Committee consisting of gentlemen whose knowledge and experience, whether administrative, financial, or commercial, entitles their judgment to the greatest weight, and who may be expected to give an impartial and unbiussed opinion upon the questions which will be submitted to them. They will be requested to consider and report upon your proposals and upon any other matter which they may regard as relevant thereto, including the monetary system now in force in India, and the effect of any proposed change on the internal trade and taxation of that country; and they will, further, be invited to submit any modifications of your proposals or suggestions of their own which they may consider advisable for securing stability of exchange with the United Kingdom, and for the establishment in India of a satisfactory system of currency. I agree with your Excellency in thinking it most desirable that the matter should be dealt with as speedily as possible. The Committee will be appointed immediately, and will commence their inquiry as soon as may be found practicable. In view of the very great importance of the interests affected, and of the intricacy of the questions involved, it cannot be expected that they will report for some time to come; but you may rest assured that no effort will be wanting on their part or on that of her Majesty's Government to avoid unnecessary delay. I think it very desirable that the views of your Excellency's Government should be explained to the Committee by some competent officer or officers deputed by you for the purpose; and I request that you will take measures accordingly on the receipt of this despatch."

It remains to be added that the Government of India, in a despatch—written before, but received after that of Lord George Hamilton was written—point out that Lord Herschell's Indian Currency Committee sat from October 21, 1892, to May 31, 1893. They add:—

"The chief objection to such a reference is that it must involve delay, and your Lordship will, we think, agree with us that it is of real importance that no avoidable delay should be allowed to occur in arriving at some conclusion on the measures to be adopted. It is for your Lordship to determine what further enquiry is requisite, but we venture to express the hope that it may be possible to conduct it in such a manner as to permit of the early introduction of the necessary legislation, and thus to limit the inconvenience and danger of the period of transition."

The delay, however, is to take place, though it will be seen that, in the letter to the Committee published above, Lord George Hamilton urges the Committee to avoid all unnecessary delay, and to confine their enquiry strictly to relevant matters. The Indian Government have been assured that no effort will be wanting, either on the part of her Majesty's Government or of the Committee, to arrive at a speedy decision.

Opinions of the British Press.

The *Times* (April 30) said:—The rejection by the Government last year of the proposals made by the United States for a reconsideration of the currency question in its international aspects rendered it quite inevitable that this country should enquire in what way the special difficulties, in this regard, of our Indian Empire can be met. The closing of the Indian mints to the coinage of silver, adopted in 1893 on the report of Lord Herschell's Committee, was temporarily successful in maintaining the exchange value of the rupee. It is admitted, however, that this measure has led to new and increasing complications, and that a revision of the policy then adopted cannot be any longer deferred. The fall to a currency based upon the market value of silver or the rise to a currency based upon a gold standard are equally beset with practical embarrassments. Lord George Hamilton desires to submit the proposals of the Government of India on this grave question to a strong committee—nominally departmental, but really independent—over which he has asked Sir Henry Fowler to preside. The acceptance of this onerous duty by Sir Henry Fowler is worthy of all praise. A leading member of the Opposition is generally, and not unnaturally, unwilling to pledge himself to a policy which, if it succeeds, will redound to the credit of the party in power. This, however, is a subject which lies altogether outside of political lines, and Sir Henry Fowler's impartiality in dealing with it is not likely to be questioned in any quarter. His colleagues are all men of mark and weight, and their report will have an authority that will strengthen the hands of the Government in dealing with a most perplexing problem.

The *Daily News* (April 30) said:—Sir Henry Fowler was not at the India Office when the mints were closed to silver in 1893, though he was, of course, responsible for the decision as a member of the Cabinet. The closing of the mints was a very strong measure, much criticised at the time, but completely justified by success. When the present Government came into office, Mr. Balfour declared that the Indian mints would be re-opened. But they have not been, and Lord George Hamilton declines to re-open them. As they are not to be re-opened, the logical alternative is the adoption of a gold standard, and that is what the Committee will probably recommend. They will sit in private, and the despatch from the Government of India which will be laid before them is confidential. The Indian Government, however, are known to be in favour of a gold standard, which is now almost universal throughout the civilised world. No better chairman for such

a Committee than Sir Henry Fowler could have been selected, and the Committee appears to have been upon the whole well chosen. The only Cabinet Minister placed upon it is Lord Balfour, whom rumour has marked out as successor to Lord Elgin. . . . . The Committee is rather too large than too small. But we trust that its size will not prevent it from coming to a speedy conclusion, which Lord George Hamilton truly describes as urgent and imperative.

The *Manchester Guardian* (May 2) wrote:—Much must depend, as regards the report of the new Indian Currency Committee, on the witnesses who may be admitted to give evidence and on the interpretation of Lord George Hamilton's instructions. The letter of the present Secretary of State for India to his predecessor in that office, Sir Henry Fowler, is not free from ambiguity of expression. On the surface it justifies the opinion that Lord George Hamilton has not been quite uninfluenced by the vigorous protests of the Bombay, Manchester, and Glasgow Chambers of Commerce against the exclusion of the reopening of the Indian mints to the free coinage of silver from the catalogue of subjects referred to the Committee. But while Lord George Hamilton's instructions empower the Committee to submit any "modifications" of the proposals of the present Government of India or "any suggestions of their own," he may ultimately maintain that his subordination of all proposals to the purpose of securing "a stable exchange" between India and the United Kingdom excludes the question of the independent reopening of the Indian mints to silver. The real question to-day is whether even a stable exchange is the most essential thing. It has been demonstrated that an approximately stable exchange may be maintained by indefinite borrowing and the sacrifice of the industries and trade of India; but it is permissible to doubt whether even stability is worth this price. Characteristically, in an article on the new Committee, the *Times* tells its readers that the closing of the mints was "temporarily successful" in maintaining the exchange value of the rupee. It has really not been successful in this sense for a single second of time. It is the policy of repeated borrowing which has maintained exchange, and not the closing of the mints. For the present we may venture to assume that the men who compose the new Committee will interpret their instructions in the most liberal and common-sense spirit, and that they will refuse to stultify themselves in a vain attempt to justify the rash utterances of Lord George Hamilton and Sir James Westland.

Imperial Parliament.

Friday, April 29.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PETITIONS.

East India (Contagious Diseases),—Petitions from Partick, Glasgow (two), Inverness, Bentham, and Leeds; to lie upon the Table.

THE NEW CURRENCY PROPOSALS.

East India (Currency),—Copy presented—of Correspondence respecting the proposals on Currency made by the Government of India [by Command]; to lie upon the Table.

DISBURSEMENTS OF HOME TREASURY.

East India (Disbursements of Home Treasury),—Return presented—relative thereto [Address April 28; Sir William Houldsworth]; to lie upon the Table.

THE INDIAN PENSIONS ACT.

Sir Charles Dilke asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what sum was devoted, in the financial year 1897-8, to military works, naval works, barracks, and Indian military pensions, under the Indian Pensions Act, respectively, out of the £2,751,000 named by him as issued to meet capital expenditure, and, what sum was estimated by him to be spent in the present financial year on each of those heads.

Sir M. Hicks Beach: The sum of £2,751,000 named by me as issued to meet capital expenditure in 1897-98 included for naval works £596,000, military works £750,000, barracks £300,000—total £1,646,000. The annuity payable under the Indian Army Pension Deficiency Act—£215,000—is one of the Consolidated Fund charges met out of income. The sums estimated to be required for the three capital services above in 1898-99 may be taken to be—naval works £1,750,000, military works £850,000, barracks £300,000. But the results of the past three years have proved that it is not possible to estimate these matters with any accuracy.

Monday, May 2.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PETITIONS.

East India (Contagious Diseases),—Petitions against State regulation; from Bridge of Allan, Acock's Green, Birmingham, and Leigh; to lie upon the Table.

TROOPS BEYOND THE FRONTIER.

Sir Charles Dilke asked the Secretary of State for India, as regards battalions, British and Native, field batteries (if any) and mountain batteries, British and Native, what were the differences between the existing forces and those maintained before the attacks on Malakand, Shabkadr, and Lundi Kotal, at or near the following stations or posts: Panjkora, Malakand, the Khyber and neighbourhood, Kuram and neighbourhood:

Whether any further charges were already in contemplation:

Whether there were any British or Kashmir troops between Panjkora and Chitral.

And whether any change had been made in the garrison of Chitral.

Lord G. Hamilton: The Malakand force has been temporarily increased by 1 British and 2 Native infantry battalions, 2 squadrons of Native cavalry, and a company of Native sappers. There are no troops on the Panjkora.

At the Khyber and neighbourhood there are, according to the latest returns, 6 British and 7 Native infantry battalions, 3 British mountain batteries, 3 companies Native sappers, and 2 squadrons Native cavalry. Prior to the recent campaigns there were only small detachments at Jamrud, and the Khyber Rifles in the Khyber Pass. At Kuram and in the neighbourhood the increase consists of half a squadron Native cavalry.

The distribution of the troops on the frontier has not yet been finally settled, and I cannot therefore state what further changes may be made.

There are no British or Kashmir troops between the Panjkora and Chitral; in the garrison of which place no change has been made.

THE CASE OF CAPTAIN JUDGE.

Mr. Butcher asked the Secretary of State for India, whether his attention had been called to the case of Captain Judge, late of the 2nd Goorkhas, who left England to join his regiment in September, 1897, and was killed in the battle of Dargai:

Whether, if Captain Judge had lived, he would have completed his 20 years' service in January, 1898, and have been entitled to retire on a pension of £200 a year:

Whether Captain Judge left a widow and three children:

Whether it was customary, in the case of an officer killed in action, for his widow to receive a Queen's pension of £100 a year, and a gratuity equal to one year's pay of her husband, and for each child to receive a compassionate allowance and a gratuity equal to one third of a year's pay:

Whether the authorities had refused to grant the widow and children of Captain Judge any pension, allowance, or gratuity whatever:

Whether the authorities had also refused to refund the amount expended by Captain Judge for his passage money from England to India to join his regiment:

And, whether the Government would reconsider the case, and make such allowances and grants as would meet the requirements of the case.

Lord G. Hamilton: The facts are as stated in the first part of my honourable friend's question. Captain Judge rejoined his regiment from leave at his own expense, and, not having been recalled by the Government of India, was not entitled to refund of passage money.

Mrs. Judge receives, as my honourable friend is no doubt aware, a pension under the Service Family Pension Regulations. With regard to the additional pension and gratuities mentioned in my honourable friend's question, the Royal Warrant lays down certain rules as to the pecuniary position of those who can receive them, and the private circumstances of Captain Judge's family, independently of the family service pension, are such as to render them ineligible under these rules.

In reply to further questions,

Lord G. Hamilton said that the regulations had been in force for a long time, and he very much doubted whether the authorities would be disposed to relax them. As to the repayment of passage money, he admitted that the existing regulations were not satisfactory, and he had caused a despatch to be addressed to the Indian Government on the subject.

Mr. T. M. Healy asked if British officers were to understand that the British Treasury was responsible for the regulations.

Lord G. Hamilton said that the regulations had been in force for years, and they were based on the principle that people who were tolerably well to do did not get as much as those who were not.

PETITION FROM THE ZEMINDAR OF KHARIAR.

Mr. Herbert Roberts asked the Secretary of State for India whether he had yet received the Petition of Lal Brijraj Sinh, Zemindar of Khariar, praying for the redress of certain grievances, of which the receipt was acknowledged as long ago as July 30, 1897, by Mr. H. M. Laurie, Deputy Commissioner of Raipur, and forwarded by him the same day to the Chief Commissioner of the division; and, if received, what reply had been given.

Lord G. Hamilton: Yes, sir. A memorial from the Zemindar of Khariar has been forwarded to me by the Government of India, and is now under my consideration.

DECREES FOR THE RESTITUTION OF CONJUGAL RIGHTS.

Mr. Pickersgill asked the Secretary of State for India whether his attention had been drawn to the resolution passed by the Indian Social Conference at Amraoti, in December last, in favour of the abolition of the imprisonment of women in enforcement of decrees for the restitution of conjugal rights:

Whether he was aware that a distinct promise was given by a former Viceroy that this provision of the Code should be expunged when the statute again came up for revision:

And would he explain why the opportunity presented recently, when the Penal Code Amendment Act, 1898, was passing through the Viceroy's Council, was not availed of in order to fulfil the said promise.

Lord G. Hamilton: I have not seen the resolution, but I am aware that the Government of India, in 1890, expressed their intention that when opportunity offered to introduce a clause which would

enable the Civil Courts to refuse to send women to prison in such cases. Such an opportunity occurred in 1894, when a Bill was brought in to amend the Code of Civil Procedure. The original Bill contained a provision to the effect which I have stated, but as explained in an answer given in this House by my predecessor on April 9, 1895, "the clause was unanimously struck out by a Select Committee of 7 members, 4 of whom were natives of India, on the ground that the country was not yet ripe for such a change; and a motion to restore it was lost in the Legislative Council by 15 votes to 2."

The question is one of civil procedure and has nothing to do with the Penal Code or the criminal courts.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON INDIAN EXPENDITURE. WHAT IS A "SHORT TIME"?

Mr. COHEN asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he could state when the Report would be presented of the Royal Commission on the administration of the expenditure of India, and when the proposals of the Government of India on currency, which were laid on the table on Friday, would be presented to members.

Lord G. HAMILTON: Having made enquiry, I am informed by the chairman that he hopes within a short time to lay his draft report before his colleagues. As regards the second question, I hoped the papers to which my hon. friend refers would have been distributed on Saturday; but I am told that they will be in the Vote Office to-night.

Sir H. FOWLER enquired whether the noble lord would ask for a definition of "short time," as there had been so many short times during this enquiry.

Lord G. HAMILTON remarked that he had no control over the chairman of the Commission, who was quite independent of the India Office.

Tuesday, May 3.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PETITIONS.

East India (Contagious Diseases),—Petitions against State regulation from Glasgow and Eccles; to lie upon the Table.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION IN MADRAS.

Mr. SAMUEL SMITH asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he could state the number of defaulters in the Presidency of Madras, in addition to the 56,648 whose lands were sold for non-payment of land assessment in the seven years 1887-94, whose personal property was sold for the same reason in those seven years:

Whether the Madras land revenue returns for the years 1894-5 and 1895-6 had yet been received at the India Office, and whether they contained that information; and if so, could he state the number of cultivators whose land or personal property were sold for non-payment of assessment in those two years, and also in the previous seven years:

Whether he could state the proportion of land sold for non-payment of assessment which was bought in by Government, and what was bought by other persons respectively, and whether the former amounted to more than forty-four per cent.:

And, whether he would lay upon the Table of the House the last Report received from the Madras Government relating to land revenue affairs.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The number of defaulters, whose personal property was sold for non-payment of land revenue in Madras during the seven years 1887-94, was on the average of those years 7,967 in each year, out of a total number of more than three million holdings under Government besides a very large number under zemindars. The reports do not specify whether these defaulters were in addition to the defaulters whose land was sold.

The Madras revenue returns for 1894-95 and 1895-96 have been received; and they give the numbers of defaulters whose real property and personal property was sold for arrears of land revenue. If the terms "land" and "real property" are assumed for this purpose to be convertible, then the figures are:—

	Seven years. 1887-94.	Two years. 1894-96.
Defaulters whose land was sold	56,648	14,411
Defaulters whose personal property was sold	55,772	6,717

During the nine years to which the foregoing figures relate, the proportion of defaulters' lands bought in by Government was between 44 and 45 per cent.; and the proportion bought in by other persons was between 55 and 56.

Copies of the Madras land revenue reports for the years 1894-5 and 1895-6 can be furnished to the hon. member if he wishes for them. I do not propose to lay them on the Table.

THE PLAGUE IN CALCUTTA.

Sir JOHN LENG asked the Secretary of State for India whether he had any later information than had been communicated to the Press respecting the outbreak of the plague at Calcutta:

And, whether in dealing with it, every care would be taken not to excite the religious antagonism of the Natives.

Lord G. HAMILTON: My latest information regarding the plague at Calcutta is dated May 1 and 2. The existence of local plague cases has, I regret to say, been placed beyond doubt; and instructions have been given for carrying out the preventive precautions prescribed by the Venice Convention; 23 cases of plague and seven deaths occurred during the last four days of April.

I am confident that the Government in combating the plague at Calcutta will give due weight to the religious sentiments of the people, and will make every endeavour to obtain their co-operation.

THE PLAGUE RIOTS AT BOMBAY. NOT "DELIBERATELY PLANNED."

Sir MANCHERJEE BHOWNAGGREE asked the Secretary of State for India, if the expected despatch from the Government of Bombay on the riots which took place in that city in the beginning of March had been received:

Whether, if such a despatch was received, he would state the particulars contained in it, especially as regards the origin of the riots:

And, whether he would place the despatch on the Table of the House.

Lord G. HAMILTON: (1) The despatch to which my hon. friend refers has been received.

(2) The Bombay Government are of opinion that the riots were not the result of political agitation nor deliberately planned, but were merely a sudden ebullition of disorder among an uneducated and fanatical section of the community. They add that the leading representatives of all classes have exerted themselves to allay excitement.

(3) The despatch and its enclosures will be included in the next set of plague Papers laid upon the Table.

Thursday, May 5.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PETITIONS.

East India (Contagious Diseases),—Petitions against State Regulation; from Glasgow (two), Sunderland, Southport, and Greenock; to lie upon the Table.

ENTERIC FEVER AMONG EUROPEAN TROOPS.

General RUSSELL asked the Secretary of State for India, whether the Government of India had arrived at any conclusion regarding the cause of the great increase in enteric fever among European troops in India:

Whether the investigations which it promised should be made were concluded:

And, whether it was proposed to adopt any special measures to arrest the spread of that malady.

Lord G. HAMILTON: No definite conclusion has been arrived at as to the cause of the increase in enteric fever among British troops in India, and the investigations on this subject are still proceeding, selected medical officers having been specially detailed for this duty. Generally the measures taken to check the spread of the disease are the improvement of the water supply, the provision of pure milk and butter, and improved sanitation of camps, cantonments, and barracks. One cantonment, Dragshais, where there have been serious outbreaks of enteric fever, has been completely evacuated for a year, pending the installation of an improved water supply and the disinfection of the barracks and their vicinity.

THE PUNITIVE POLICE AT POONA. HOW WAS THE FORCE IMPOSED?

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India, whether the Bombay Government consulted the local officers before imposing upon the city of Poona a punitive force costing Rs. 230,400:

Whether he was aware that both the District Magistrate of Poona and the Commissioner of the Division protested against that police being imposed:

Whether the Commissioner was censured by the Government for making that protest, and threatened to resign unless the censure was withdrawn:

Whether the censure was accordingly withdrawn or modified:

And, whether he would lay the correspondence upon the Table of the House.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The decision to impose for two years a punitive police, costing about Rx. 11,500 per annum, upon the city of Poona was arrived at by the Bombay Government, who are alone responsible for it; and their action was approved by me in Council. I am not in possession of any information as to the various opinions of such subordinate officers as may have been consulted; and I should not be prepared to lay on the Table of the House any correspondence which may have taken place between the Government of Bombay and its subordinates on this subject.

THE COMMITTEE ON CURRENCY.

Mr. LOUGH asked the Secretary of State for India whether the words "internal trade," used in the letter of appointment of the Indian Currency Committee, were intended to exclude from the enquiry the export trade of that country, and whether he would consider the desirability of adding some further words to make it clear that the Committee should examine the effects the present and proposed currency regulations might have upon Indian exports:

Whether, in view of the importance of the industry, he was willing to add to the Committee one of the large London importers and growers of Indian and Ceylon tea:

And whether any opportunity of discussing the reference would be given to the House.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The despatch from the Government of India, which is the principal subject of reference to the Committee, deals with the measures necessary for securing "the stability of exchange," which necessitates an enquiry into their effect on the export trade. The reference to the internal trade was inserted to show that in the opinion of the Government the effect on that trade would also form an important part of the enquiry of the Committee.

One of the members of the Committee is, I believe, interested in the Indian and Ceylon tea trade.

The Committee is now finally constituted, and is making arrangements to begin its deliberations forthwith under the letter of reference, which cannot now be modified. I do not propose to take any measures with the view of bringing the matter before the House in its present stage.

THE PLAGUE RIOTS AT BOMBAY. THE FALSE CHARGE OF INSTIGATION.

Sir MANCHERJEE BHOWNAGGREE asked the Secretary of State for

India, whether his attention had been drawn to the report of a meeting held at Bombay, by some leading Mahometan residents, on the 6th ultimo, for the purpose of contradicting certain telegraphic intelligence published in the English Press on March 11 to the effect that the riots which had just taken place in that city were instigated for other than plague reasons, and prompted by influential Mahometans in other parts of the country:

And, whether the despatch received from the Bombay Government, or any other official communication, contained any confirmation whatsoever of those statements; and, if not, whether he would make a statement upon the subject which might remove the general impression created by the telegram above referred to, that influential Mahometan gentlemen residing in Bombay or other parts of India had previous knowledge of the disturbance and were responsible for the same.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I have seen with satisfaction a report in the newspapers of the meeting to which my hon. friend refers. My hon. friend will not have failed to notice that the view of the Government of Bombay as to the origin of the riots, which I quoted in my reply to a question on Tuesday last, confirms the statement that no influential gentlemen resident in Bombay, whether Mahometans or others, were responsible for what occurred.

THE NEW ARMY PROPOSALS. THE COST TO INDIA.

Mr. PROVAND asked the Secretary of State for India, by how much had the Indian Finance Minister estimated the additional charge incurred by the advanced rate of pay to British troops on service in India in excess of the 27 lakhs and 20 lakhs provided for in his current estimate:

Whether he could say how long that additional charge was likely to press on the Indian finances:

And, whether the Imperial Treasury would pay the whole or any portion of the excess until the charge was adjusted to the Finance Minister's estimate.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The net permanent charge for the increased pay to British troops in India, that is after allowing for the abolition of deferred pay, is estimated at 27 lakhs of rupees annually. For the current year, the extra charge is now estimated at about 45 lakhs, and this amount will be diminished annually as the abolition of deferred pay has effect till it is reduced, about five years hence, to the above permanent charge of 27 lakhs. As I have already stated in reply to a question in this House on March 3 last, the charge will be borne by Indian revenues.

THE REPORTED MURDER OF DR. SIRCAR.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he had received confirmation of the reported murder of Dr. Sircar, honorary magistrate and municipal commissioner of Barrackpore; and, if so, whether he would state the circumstances under which his death took place.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I have seen a statement in the newspapers in regard to this matter, but I have received no official information from India on the subject.

THE PLAGUE AT CALCUTTA.

Mr. HERBERT ROBERTS asked the Secretary of State for India whether his attention had been drawn to the speech of the Lieutenant-Governor at the Legislative Council at Calcutta on the 30th ultimo, in reference to the regulations which would be adopted in that city by the Government in view of the outbreak of the plague:

Whether the Lieutenant-Governor was correctly reported to have given an assurance that no wholesale quarantine would be imposed as at Bombay; that in no case would wife and husband be separated; and that every respect would be paid to the Purdah system:

And whether he could give any information as to the extent to which the inoculation treatment against plague by Professor Haffkine's method had been adopted at Calcutta.

Lord G. HAMILTON: I have seen the newspaper account of the Lieutenant-Governor's speech to which the hon. member's question refers.

I have ascertained from the Viceroy that assurance has been given by the Bengal Government that wholesale quarantine against plague will not be enforced, but that arrangements will be made for inspecting travellers from infected localities, for segregating persons suspected of plague, and for treating plague-stricken travellers. Members of families will not be separated when sent to segregation camps, and the Purdah system will be respected. Private plague hospitals and segregation camps are permitted.

Inoculation is not enforced on anyone; but arrangements are made for inoculating under Professor Haffkine's system persons who desire to be thus protected, and special concessions have been made to encourage this form of inoculation.

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The work of the business department of INDIA would be greatly facilitated if subscribers would themselves forward their subscriptions (with their numbers, names, and addresses) direct to the Manager at the London Office.

ET CAETERA.

We take the following from the list of those who were "called" to the Bar on Wednesday last:—

Lincoln's Inn.—Behari Lal Merh, Edinburgh and Allahabad University; Devi Dayal; Noshirvan Burjojee Behramjee; Surendra Lal Khastgir, Calcutta University; Krishnaji Waman Bhat; Jayavant Dinanath Madgavkar, Bombay University; and Syed Ali Karim.

The P. and O. s.s. "Sutlej" which arrived at Venice, from Port Said, on April 25, carried among other passengers, the following:—Colonel Rhodes, Captain and Mrs. Fitzclarence, Lord and Lady Clinton, and Lieut.-Colonel, Mrs. and Miss Kaye.

The "Ballarat" (P. and O.), from Calcutta, arrived at Port Said on April 21. Her list of passengers included the following:—Colonel Wood, Captain and Miss Baker, Surg.-Colonel O'Brien, Major Evans, Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins, Major Gassett, Mr. Mamashi, Capt. and Mrs. Breeks, and Lady Mills.

The British India Steam Navigation Co's. s.s. "Golconda," which leaves London for Calcutta, on May 13, carries the following passengers:—Mr. De St. Croise, and Mr. J. Grant.

Sir Henry Fowler, M.P., will distribute the prizes on Speech Day, at the Leys School, Cambridge, on June 9.

Thibet and its mysteries are fast attaining to a literature of their own. Another important addition is being issued immediately by Mr. Fisher Unwin, in Captain Welby's "Through Unknown Thibet." The author and his fellow-traveller, Lieutenant Malcolm, did not reach Lhassa, but they experienced many stirring adventures during their journey from Leh to Pekin. The book does not pretend to be more than an entertaining description of the captain's travels and observations.

It may not be generally known that Mrs. Anne Ritchie, who contributes the biographical introduction to "The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray," her father, is the wife of Mr. Richmond Ritchie, Lord George Hamilton's principal private secretary at the India Office. Mr. Ritchie was formerly connected with the Finance Department of that office, and for that reason was appointed secretary to the Royal Commission on Indian Civil and Military Expenditure, a position which he resigned when the present Government came into office.

Almost simultaneously with the Queen's arrival at Windsor, Lord Salisbury reached Charing Cross on Sunday night from Beaulieu. He crossed from Calais to Dover accompanied by Lady Cranborne and her childern, and travelled to London in a special saloon attached to the mail train. Upon the platform to welcome Lord Salisbury were Lord and Lady Selborne, with their two sons, and the Hon. Schomberg K. McDonnell, the Prime Minister's private secretary. Lord Salisbury's sojourn of over a month in the South of France had obviously wrought a great improvement in his health. He was considerably bronzed, and moved as though his health and strength were entirely restored. After greeting his relatives and private secretary, the Premier entered his brougham with Lady Cranborne and drove to Arlington Street. The Hon. S. K. McDonnell stated that he had never seen his chief looking better, and added that the passage across the Channel had been excellent.

No demonstration such as would have marked the return of the Leader of the House of Commons to the Front Bench greeted the Premier in the House of Lords on Monday, but several Peers advanced to shake hands with him. Lord Colville of Culross's welcome was enthusiastically loud. Lord Salisbury paid a visit to the Lord Chancellor on the Woolsack, where he was joined by Lord Herschell, the three peers remaining some moments in friendly conversation.

A curious indication of the distrust felt by the Tory Party leaders in the support through thick and thin of the Unionist rank and file is seen in the House of Commons at each division. When the House divides a junior Whip takes up his position at the side doors in the chamber itself leading to the lobby in which the opponents of the Government intend to record their votes. Each member as he passes is narrowly scrutinised. This practice, which has been recently adopted, is supposed to arise from a desire to preclude Tory members who, when voting against the Government, are anxious to slip into the lobby unobserved, from escaping the ordeal of running the gauntlet which would certainly await them on going openly from the House through the main door into the Opposition division lobby.

People suffering from eccentricities of management at the Post Office write to Mr. Henniker Heaton. This position of responsibility and trust has made the member for Canterbury acquainted with a curious instance. A lady posted at Cardross, to a friend in India, a packet containing a small water-colour drawing, franking the missive with a halfpenny stamp. The letter did not get further than Clerkenwell, where it is now retained pending the response of the friend in India to a demand for twopence, which it is stated "may be sent either by Post Office order or by British postage stamps." As British postage stamps are not on sale in India, nothing remains for the addressee, if he wants the packet, except the Post Office order.

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